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ABSTRACT

To secure more significant input from industry in Australian college programs, a number of mechanisms exist, including college councils. A study surveyed the operation of existing councils from the perspective of college administrators, using an extensive questionnaire, and from the perspective of members of a number of councils perceived as effective, through interviews. About 150 of the approximately 200 technical and further education colleges that were surveyed responded. One of the most conspicuous features to emerge from the study was a recognition of the uniqueness of individual councils. This unique character is clearly part of the fabric of each college and should be maintained, but the research showed that most colleges were not making full use of the competencies of their council. Analysis of effective college councils revealed a number of common strategies: (1) well-defined council goals; (2) the provision of orientation and/or staff development for council members; (3) membership representative of the college community; and (4) the development of a genuine partnership between college administrators and the council. The study concluded that most of the strategies identified could be implemented relatively simply, although they may need to be accompanied by some attitudinal changes. (Includes the questionnaire and 64 references.) (Author/KC)

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TAFE COLLEGE COUNCILS:

STRATEGIES FOR INCREASED EFFECTIVENESS

CHARLES HENDERSON

TAFE
TAFE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

ADELAIDE 1990

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ABSTRACT

Australian TAFE systems are under considerable pressure fron government, industry and unions to include in their educational programs a more significant input from industry. A number of mechanisms by which this objective may be met already exists, including college councils.

This study surveyed the operation of existing councils from the perspective of college administrators, by means of an extensive questionnaire; and from the perspective of members of a number of councils which were selected on the grounds of their perceived effectiveness, by means of interview. The data collected were analysed using a variety of statistical techniques, including measures of association (Chi-square and correlation) and analysis of variance.

One of the most conspicuous features to emerge from the study was a recognition of the uniqueness of individual councils. This uniqueness appears to be a function of the individual membership, the college administration, and the interaction of the last two groups within the context of the rules or regulations governing the powers, functions and duties of councils in each state or territory.

This unique character is clearly part of the fabric of each college and should be maintained, but at the same time it was evident from the research that most colleges were not making full use of the competencies of their council.

Analysis of individual college councils which appeared to be consistently effective revealed a number of common strategies. Among those closely associated with successful councils were; well defined council goals; the provision of orientation and/or staff development for council members; membership representative of the college community; and, the development of a genuine partnership between college administrators and the council. Numerous other strategies were also identified, but these were less strongly associated with successful councils.

It is believed that most of the strategies identified could be implemented relatively simply, although they may need to be accompanied by some attitudinal changes.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACET	Australian Council for Employment and Training
CTEC	Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TAFEAC	Technical and Further Education Advisory Committee
VIPSEC	Victorian Post Secondary Education Commission

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1. INTRODUCTION

Most Australian states and territories make provision for TAFE college councils, or similarly named bodies. They range in function from token advisory bodies to bodies which exercise full executive powers.

Four major reasons for their existence can be identified:

- .the need to involve industry and community in vocational education/training issues;
- .democracy;
- .the requirements of accountability;
- .the active promotion of TAFE.

1.1 Industry and community involvement in vocational education/ training issues

The argument for industry and community involvement in vocational education and training can be summarized as follows. It is generally agreed that the Australian economy requires radical restructuring and successful restructuring will necessitate substantial vocational training/retraining. Furthermore the institutional providers of vocational training/ retraining have performed inadequately in the past with TAFE the main, but not the only, institutional provider. Therefore mechanisms need to be set in place to ensure that industry and community are adequately heard in TAFE.

There is substantial evidence to support the basic contention outlined above.

The Treasurer Keating "banana republic" comment jolted the nation into what has become a clearly articulated realisation that the economy must be restructured or Australia will face a rapid decline in living standards and descend to the economic status of a "third world" country. The urgent need to restructure the economy has been accepted by unions, employers, government and the community at large.

The central element of economic restructuring is improvement in productivity. Productivity growth, in turn, derives from technological change, increases in capital intensity, improvements in labour efficiency and economies of scale. The first three of these are closely linked to education and training.

The linkage is widely recognised. Most expressions of the need to restructure are accompanied by a recognition of the vital role to be played by the education and training system, a role recognised in the Skills For Australia document:

> Education and training will play a vital role in productivity performance, directly conditioning the quality, depth and flexibility of our labour force skills.
> (Dawkins and Holding 1987, p.4)

and

> The government is determined that our education and training systems will play an active role in the process of economic readjustment which faces Australia, and in contributing to rising living standards.
> (Dawkins and Holding 1987, p.6)

However,the contribution made by the institutional providers of this education and training has been condemned frequently.

In Western Australia a recent report has stated

> ... the state's workforce has remained under-educated and under-skilled
> (Interim Council on Productivity and Training 1988,p.6)

because of

> The inadequacy of our education system to produce sufficiently skilled entrants to the workforce
> (Interim Council on Productivity and Training 1988,p.7)

and,

> This will necessitate improvements in the quality, structure and flexibility of education and training provision
> (Interim Council on Productivity and Training 1988,p.8)

The Report's arguments, augmented with criticisms regarding "responsiveness", paraphrase much of the present widespread attitude towards vocational education and training.

Hunter and Austen observed in their research:

> [industry personnel] were frequently critical of dominance by educationists with attitudes that were divorced from the immediate realities of the workplace.
> (Hunter and Austen 1984, p.17)

Hayton (1988) has written, with respect to industry restructuring:

> .... but Australia's training system has responded slowly to these changes.
> (Hayton 1988, p.2)

Curtain, (1988) addressing the question of skill shortages, has stated that:

> The responsiveness of educational institutions to addressing potential skill shortages is limited .
> (Curtain 1988, p.9)

The Victorian State Training Board (1988) lists "ten key priority tasks for the state training system" including "a more responsive TAFE system."

On the other hand, CTEC, commenting on TAFE's supposed unresponsiveness to industry, has defended existing practices, claiming that "the system is not as unresponsive as is often alleged" (CTEC 1987a, p.33) while those associated with TAFE have similarly rejected the broad assertions that TAFE "hasn't delivered the goods" as "most unfair" (Gambetta 1988, p.2).

Nevertheless, similar negative perceptions appear to have conditioned attitudes among those concerned with the restructuring of the economy.

Herbert (1987), outlining the metal industry employers' perspective in a keynote address to the Skills For Prosperity Conference, stated:

> A new direction in training, skills enhancement and career development in industry will not evolve by itself. In the final analysis it will be industry - the employers who require the skills and the employees who are to acquire them that will have a major influence on the nature and pace of change.
> (Herbert 1987, p.1)

and,

> This will necessitate industry being much more prescriptive in its advice to training institutions ...
> (Herbert 1987, p.7)

Opening the same Conference, Mr J. Wright, then Chairman of the since lapsed ACET, identified three key training and/or retraining issues, including

> "To achieve a more effective partnership between industry and the formal education sector in matters such as content, length, structure and vocational relevance.
> (Wright 1987, p.11)

The Skills For Australia document highlights similar concerns, stating that:

> The extent to which our tertiary institutions are able to influence and respond to emerging skill requirements will be directly influenced by the involvement of industry in course design and monitoring.
> (Dawkins and Holding 1987, p.9)

and,

> Governments and educational institutions will have a facilitating role ... , but major impetus for change will

> need to come from employers, unions and individuals.
> (Dawkins and Holding 1987, p.11)

In recent years a number of missions have visited other countries to investigate issues of economic restructuring, productivity and vocational education/training. Most have commented on the degree to which Australia lags behind those economies regarded as exemplary in developing relationships between employers, unions and institutional providers of vocational education/training. A West Australian Government sponsored mission recently reported:

> In Germany the private sector plays a much more extensive role in the planning and provision of training, further training and retraining ...
> (Tripartite Overseas Mission on Productivity and Training 1987, p.20)

while the ACTU/TDC mission recommendation, no. 4.6 stated that:

> As part of its overall approach to labour market planning, the Government should, ...
> b) Develop tripartite procedures at the point of delivery which ensure that labour market information is transmitted quickly and effectively between key decision makers, including unions, employers, education and training institutions, ...
> c) Develop similar (tripartite) procedures (at local, industry and central level) to help identify problem areas in an industry or locality which might limit economic performance.
> (ACTU/TDC Mission to Western Europe 1987, p.127)

While none of the above is specifically directed towards TAFE, nevertheless it is clear that TAFE, because of its central role in vocational education and training in all states and territories, will need to be seen to be acting in close concert with industry, unions and community. How this might be done forms part of the basis of the research described in this paper.

1.2 Democratic issues

The corporate plans for TAFE in Queensland (Draft 1988), New South Wales (1983), South Australia (1986) and Western Australia (1989), and the mission statement of the Victorian State Training Board (1988) all include objectives relating to the provision of access or "second opportunity" education, and the provision of opportunities for personal development.

Both in Australia and overseas there is widespread recognition that the community or clientele towards which these objectives are primarily directed should in some sense be represented in the decision-making processes concerned with the provision of education or training for these groups. This recognition, which might be loosely termed the "democratic thrust", was particularly evident during the 1970's; however it would appear to endure as an unstated principle to the present day.

1.3 Accountability

Accountability has been heavily emphasised in recent years. The formal government audit process in most states is now as oriented to "value for money" considerations as it is to financial probity. With respect to these demands for accountability in the area of public administration, Cronbach, et al, drily observed in a comment with which TAFE administrators would readily identify, that:

> accountability is most demanded of those public servants condemned to farm rocky ground under capricious weather conditions.
>
> (Cronbach et al 1980, p.137)

Nevertheless, rocky, capricious or otherwise, accountability is a fact of life with which TAFE administrators must cope.

Foon (1986) identified two reasons for the demands for accountability in Australian education:

> First, taxpayers want schools to deliver evidence that they are giving society its money's worth. Second, accountability implies an extension of the democratic right for equality of educational opportunity.
>
> (Foon 1986, p.3)

Historically, Woodburne (1982) dates the increasing concern with accountability in TAFE (in NSW at least) as "post-Kangan". He writes:

> [Post-Kangan] A new note was increasingly being added to the discussion, however; namely, that education institutions and departments should be more clearly accountable to the commumity for their decisions and actions.
>
> (Woodburne 1982, p.54)

The mechanisms by which TAFE might be held accountable vary. Performance indicators are very much in vogue at present, and formal evaluation processes continue to attract intermittent attention; however, direct contact with the client group is also recognised as a legitimate means of ensuring accountability. With specific reference to TAFE, Kangan noted:

> [In Victoria] local councils are seen as the agent for encouraging the schools and colleges to account for their

> educational activities to their respective communities (Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education 1975, p.34)

Other states have also looked to college councils to fulfill an accountability function. NSW TAFE college committees are expected to be

> ... the means by which the regional and college administrations of TAFE can be accountable to the community.
>
> (TAFE NSW, 1986)

while in Queensland the first listed function of college community councils is

> to keep the community informed regarding progress of the College. (DEVET 1988b)

1.4 The promotion of TAFE

The notion that TAFE needs better promotion is widespread within TAFE itself. TAFE staff at all levels believe that the community at large has a good awareness of the existence and purpose of the higher education sector and has positive attitudes towards higher education institutions. In contrast, there is a widespread belief that the community, or at least the opinion makers within the community, are relatively unaware of TAFE and its role in tertiary education. Although these perceptions may be intuitive, the limited research or survey evidence available in Western Australia does tend to support this understanding. At a national level Kangan (1974) suggested that:

> Departments of TAFE should examine the role of .... local councils for the purpose of encouraging more direct community responsibility.
> (Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education 1975, p.35)

However, the relative lack of promotion of TAFE is still seen as a national problem. The last CTEC Report asserted that:

> .... industry needs further encouragement and assistance to identify the benefits of vocational education and co-operation with TAFE
>
> (CTEC 1987a, p.43)

and suggests the solution.

> This process will be assisted by a more public encouragement for industry involvement with the TAFE sector and by expanding direct communication between colleges and industrial enterprises.
>
> (CTEC 1987a, p.43)

Woodburne (1982) quotes a 1974 NSW TAFE document which indicates a similar perception in that state.

> The objective should be ... to generate community interest through local participation in decision making.
>
> (Woodburne 1982, p.50)

This objective is now formally endorsed in the NSW corporate plan (TAFE New South Wales 1983, p.15) and as a specified task in the guidelines issued for TAFE college committees (TAFE New South Wales 1986, p.1).

Similarly in Victoria, the Orders In Council which formally and legally establish each college council direct that the duties of the council shall include "To advance TAFE in all aspects" (e.g. Lodden Campaspe College of TAFE, as in Victorian Government Gazette, G21, 1987, p.1077-8)

1.5 Purpose of this research and structure of the report

The preceding pages have identified a number of concerns including the importance of vocational education and training in the proposed restructuring of Australian industry; the perceived need for close industry/training institution liaison to achieve this restructuring; and, the need for TAFE colleges, for reasons of democracy and accountability, to involve their "community" in the college decision-making processes.

Clearly there are a number of means by which this involvement might be brought about, including the establishment of curriculum committees with industry and/or community membership; the employment of significant proportions of industry-based part-time lecturing staff; periodic and systematic "return to industry" programs for TAFE staff; informal liaison between college staff, industry and community, and college councils (or similar).

The purpose of this research is to investigate the function and role of college councils, specifically to identify strategies, structures and practices that appear to have given rise to more effective local community participation in TAFE colleges.

In the chapter which follows, the broad institutional background relating to college councils in each state and territory is examined. This is followed by a review of the literature on the function and operation of councils, principally from Australia, but supplemented by some of the findings from North America and the United Kingdom. An outline of the research methodology, Chapter 4, is followed by two chapters which report on the research findings, the first on the results of a major survey, the second on data gathered during a series of interviews. The final chapter draws the various elements together in a series of conclusions.

2. INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

Politically, Australia is a federation of sovereign states which have assigned certain specified powers to the central government while retaining some residual powers. Education, including TAFE, is one of these residual powers, and although there are similarities and commonalities between the structures and processes in the individual states there are also considerable differences. This is particularly evident when the question of "college councils" is considered.

In all states and territories there exist structures which link college management and the local community. These structures are known by various names, such as advisory councils, advisory committees, college committees, community councils and college councils; furthermore they possess powers almost as disparate as their titles. In some TAFE systems the college council exercises executive power; in others they exercise defined, delegated powers; in others they possess advisory and participatory powers; while in yet others they are officially encouraged, but possess neither formal status nor function.

2.1 New South Wales

Known in New South Wales as college committees, these bodies are legally constituted under the provisions of the Technical and Further Education Act, 1974, and the Regulations. Each college is required to establish a college committee.

The college committee is an advisory body and is expected to provide advice on planning and resource allocation issues, to promote TAFE, to monitor the appropriateness of the educational programs, and to be the means by which TAFE college administrations can be accountable to the local community. The Minister may also further delegate the exercise or performance of powers, authorities, duties or functions that are vested in the Minister by the Act.

Membership of college committees is carefully defined, as is the length of office. Nominations to the committee, which are essentially made through the college principal to the Minister who makes the actual appointment to the committee, are canvassed through open advertisement in the local press and are intended to be drawn from industry, commerce, the professions, the trade union movement, educational authorities and the community. It is specifically directed that the interests of Aborigines, women, the ethnic community, the handicapped and young people be represented. Committees also include college representatives from both the full-time Education Commission staff and the full-time Public Service staff, as well as the college principal as an ex officio member.

College committees are in the first instance advisory to the college administration, however they may forward advice to either the Director-General or Minister through the TAFE district council in which they operate, or alternatively, deal directly with either of these two persons.

2.2 Victoria

College councils, as they are known, are corporate bodies with full executive powers. Each council is established as a result of either a separate act of parliament as, for example, Gordon Technical College Act, 1976, or by Order-in-Council under the Post-Secondary Education Act 1978 as, for example, Constitution of Council of Bendigo College of Technical and Further Education (Victorian Government Gazette, 1984, p.321-326). In either case, the membership and composition of the council is specified and includes members appointed by the Governor-in-Council, members who must be co-opted by the council itself, the college director ex officio, and elected representatives of the teaching and non-teaching staffs.

The broad function of the council is to "be a body corporate to manage and control the college" and each council possesses powers consistent with its being the ultimate source of authority in the college. Each council's powers are contained in their constitution and in the case of Bendigo (now Loddon-Campaspe) these powers include:

> ... [the exercise of] all the functions of the body corporate, of suing and being sued and having perpetual succession under common seal and power to acquire and hold

> land or any estate in land,
>
> (Victorian Government Gazette 1984, p.322)

as well as considerable control over staffing. The powers, functions and procedures of the Loddon-Campaspe College Council are broadly similar for all other Victorian TAFE colleges.

The council has the right to delegate to the college director the authority to exercise any of its powers and duties as it sees fit.

In practice, the statutory authority by which councils have been established in Victoria gives rise to them occupying a much more central role in the governance of their respective colleges than elsewhere in Australia.

2.3 Queensland

Known in Queensland as college community councils, these bodies have only come into existence in 1988 under the auspices of the newly created Department of Employment, Vocational Education and Training. TAFE colleges are obliged to establish and operate in conjunction with a council and these have been assigned specific advisory and participatory functions chief amongst which are assisting the college in meeting ongoing and emergent needs in vocational education, and forging the strongest possible links between the college and industry, commerce and the general community.

Membership of the councils provides for up to 15 members, all appointed by the Minister, made up of the college principal, a representative each from students, staff, D.E.E.T., and field services, and up to nine representatives from business, industry, commerce, education and the wider community. Specific provision is not made for any particular groups, but the "wider community" may include "parents or special interest groups where appropriate" (Department of Employment, Vocational Education and Training 1988b, p.1).

The college council has only indirect access to external bodies, such as the Queensland Employment, Vocational Education and Training Board, through a Coordinating Committee.

2.4 Western Australia

The TAFE colleges located in non-metropolitan Western Australia are required to establish college councils. Other TAFE colleges may establish advisory committees and at present all but one college has a functioning committee.

Advisory committees are established under the Education Act, 1928 and Regulations, however, these provide very little guidance as to the role, powers or functions associated with their existence. The Regulations provide that there should be not more than 15 members, appointed by the Minister for two year terms, and that the committees may make recommendations on the establishment of courses, classes and attendance, equipment, and "other matters to ensure that it meets area requirements" (WA Education Dept.(1988), Reg.256)

Existing college councils are the outcome of an attempt in 1985 to change the nature of college governance, the results of which have not yet been completely realised. The proposed changes would have given councils substantial powers, functions and duties, but legal advice indicated that the proposed "councils" could not be created under the Act, nor could they be delegated the power to "manage" the institution. At present, the councils exist in an uneasy state, providing college management with advice, and on occasion approaching the TAFE Executive Director and/or Minister directly.

2.5 South Australia

College councils, as they are known, may be established in TAFE colleges under the Technical and Further Education Act 1976 and the Regulations. In recent years there have been considerable changes in the structure of councils as a new role has emerged. Previously almost the entire emphasis was focussed on the advisory function, however, in recent times councils have assumed a more managerial role, particularly with respect to General Service Fee funds, loans for capital works, employment of staff such as Student Services and Amenities Officers, and the management of various entrepreneurial activities. (TAFE South Australia 1987).

Councils are corporate bodies with perpetual succession, can sue or be sued, can hold or deal in property, and have designated powers, authorities, duties and obligations.

As listed in the Regulations (October, 1988) college councils are expected to take a leading role in promoting TAFE; participate in planning the educational program, staffing structures and accommodation; advise on financial needs and approve expenditure within established limits; recommend on college enrolment policy to meet local needs; control the college fund; liaise with other bodies on matters relating to further education; employ staff to perform council functions; and, make representation on matters concerning the college to the Director-General or the Minister.

The structure of council membership was changed at the beginning of 1989 to complement the changing role. Membership is not to exceed fifteen unless considered necessary by the Minister and is to include the college principal, ex officio, an elected staff and an elected student member, with the remaining members appointed by the Minister. Ministerial appointments are to be made after inviting nominations through the press and in consultation with the existing council, subject to there being at least one member with business management experience, that the community of interest of the college is represented, and that equal numbers of men and women are appointed. (TAFE South Australia 1988).

Previous to the present Regulations, and as an interim measure, council membership was generally very tightly specified. For example, the Marleston College Council was to contain:

> two representatives of the building industry
> two representatives of the furnishing industry
> one representative of the footwear industry
> one representative of the wool industry
> two representatives of the fashion industry
> one representative of the high technology interests
> one representative of West Torrens Corporation
> one representative of TAFE/Higher Education interface
> consideration will be given to achieving a gender balance.
> (TAFE South Australia 1987, p.10)

2.6 Tasmania

The relevant legislation governing the establishment of college councils in Tasmania is the Education Act 1932 and Regulations. These provide that councils may be appointed for each TAFE college with each council consisting of six to fourteen members in addition to the principal ex officio. Council members are appointed by the Minister on the recommendation of the council within certain broad guidelines contained in the Regulations. The powers and duties of councils are advisory only.

Individual councils have drawn up their own constitutions within these constraints and these provide a clearer indication of the role of councils in practice. The Tasmanian College of Hospitality Council Constitution (undated) lists as its objectives

> (a) to maintain a strong community/industry interest in the college
> (b) to ensure that all facets of the hospitality industry are aware of the objectives, achievements and existence of the college and to ensure that the college remains abreast of initiatives and changes.

The Council has advisory and participatory functions within the College on the general activities of the College, including budget priorities and staff selection, and must approve various commercial activities of the College before they may proceed. It also advises the Executive Director (TAFE) on policy, planning and courses as they relate to the college.

The membership of the Council is set at "not less than six", and includes the college principal and registrar ex officio, an elected staff and elected student member, and other members who are drawn largely from a most explicit list of government departments, commercial organizations and unions, plus two community representatives canvassed by open advertisement.

The Hobart Technical College Council Constitution (1983) is not dissimilar, but varies in sufficient detail to indicate the degree of flexibility councils have assumed in drawing up their constitutions. The Council size is set at eight to sixteen members including the principal ex officio, an elected staff member, ten members representing as far as possible, equal numbers of industry/commerce and community groups, and two representatives each from unions and women's groups. The listed responsibilities and functions are almost purely advisory and do not explicitly include a participatory role in staffing, planning or budget.

The constitution of neither council appears to be consistent with the Act and Regulations, although that of the Hobart Council is endorsed "Approved by Minister of Education"

2.7 Australian Capital Territory

In 1987,what were previously three separate TAFE colleges in the ACT were amalgamated into a single ACT Institute of TAFE.

The Institute has wide ranging powers and responsibilities, but these are vested solely in the Institute Director who is responsible among other things for the management of the Institute, staffing (non-teaching and teaching), the student body, and the setting of student fees. The Director may delegate all or any of the powers provided under the Act.

The Act provides for an Institute committee, but it is to consist of not more than five members and is completely subject to the Director. The committee may:

> 18(a) .... furnish advice to the Director with respect to such matters relating to the functions of the Institute as the Director refers to the committee; or
> 18(b) .... assist the Director in the performance of such of his or her functions as the Director requires.
> (A.C.T. Institute of Technical and Further Education Ordinance 1987, p6)

The provisions of the 1987 Act are in stark contrast to the Terms of Reference for the college councils of the three TAFE colleges that the Institute replaced. The old councils exercised authority over college finance, staffing, students and student amenities, courses, awards, and had participatory rights in questions concerning land, building and facilities. The membership of these councils was both broad and structured and included elected staff and student members. In a brief forward to the document the rationale of the councils' creation is stated as

> In keeping with the Government's support for decentralisation of decision making in education and encouragement of community participation, Councils of the ACT TAFE Colleges have been established by the Minister ...
> (Councils of the ACT Technical and Further Education Colleges August 1985)

2.8 Northern Territory

Known in the Northern Territory as post-school councils, these are established under the Education (School Councils) Regulations and the Education Amendment Act 1982. However, a Bill went before parliament in December 1988 which is expected to substantially alter the existing provisions as from July, 1989.

The existing regulations provide for up to fifteen members, including the college secretary and director, ex officio, with the remaining members appointed by the Minister. The

Ministerial appointments include an elected member of staff, an elected student representative, a nominee of the Council of Tertiary Education, and nominees from departments, employer organizations, trade associations, trade unions or other advisory and consultative groups.

The structure and composition of the council which is expected to operate as a result of the new legislation (Education Amendment Act (No.2),1988) is substantially different. It is proposed that the new council be a body corporate with perpetual succession which may acquire, hold or dispose of property, and may sue or be sued. More significantly, the act proposes that "the affairs of the college shall be conducted by its Council (Northern Territory 1988, 44.(1)), and a council shall:

> in the discharge of its responsibility for the efficient and effective administration of the college and the efficient and effective management of its finances and facilities, make the fullest possible use of services and resources available to the council through the Department of Education.
>
> (Northern Territory 1988, 44.(3)(a))

Both these proposed conditions indicate that the council possesses full executive powers within the limits of the Act, subject to the directions of the Minister. The council has the right to appoint the college principal and all college staff subject to the terms and conditions of employment being approved by the Minister in consultation with the Technical and Further Education Advisory Council.

Up to 17 members can be accommodated in the new council structure, including a chairperson, up to ten persons appointed by the Minister, the college principal and secretary ex officio, an elected staff and elected student member, a nominee of the departmental head, Public Service, and a nominee of the Technical and Further Education Advisory Council.

3. RESEARCH ON COLLEGE COUNCILS

3.1 Paucity of research evidence

Although it is widely asserted that industry, commerce and the community need to be involved in managing and determining the direction of technical and further education in Australia, there is little published evidence of research having been conducted in the area. Much of what has been published is speculative and prescriptive, and appears to have been based on value positions or from collations of anecdotal evidence. Other unrelated studies which have alluded to community involvement have done so because these elements somehow impinged on the major focus of the study concerned.

Among the few Australian studies which have addressed explicitly the issue of community involvement in TAFE are those by Woodburne (1982), Hunter and Austen (1984), Grannall (1985), Harvey (1986), and Watkins (1988). Other studies, such as Sheldrake (1988) or Hall (1988), have touched upon the issue as peripheral to the major focus of their research. Limited published research is available from North America and the United Kingdom; however, caution should be exercised if seeking to apply this to Australia because of the distinctive cultural differences.

3.2 Gaining industry/community involvement

A major focus of the published material has been the general issue of gaining industry/community involvement. The position was well stated in discussion papers issued by the NSW Department of TAFE in 1978.

> While it is possible to provide opportunity for participation - even to legislate for it, as is already the case in TAFE - the question must be asked - how willing are people to participate? While some special interest groups such as employers and trade unions can see their own role

> as participators reasonably clearly - or at least can recognise the implications for them of what goes on in the TAFE system, the situation is by no means so clear for private citizens or, if you like, for the "lay" community. Their role is more difficult to define, and their perceptions of this role will vary.
>
> (Quoted in Woodburne 1982, p.56)

Although the above quotation suggests that employers and unions recognise the implications of TAFE as they relate to them, and therefore, one might assume, will exhibit a willingness to participate meaningfully, the research evidence suggests some difficulty both in gaining participation and in the quality of that participation. A number of the issues relating to effective involvement by industry/community in TAFE were well stated in the conclusions drawn by Fleming, Berry and Mitchell which, while dating from pre-Kangan, remain relevant.

> Some of these committees are quite successful, but many are of little use. Too much emphasis is placed on ensuring these committees are representative and not enough on the contribution that each committee member can make .... There are some nominees who are out of date with the current needs of their industry, nominees who can rarely find time to attend meetings because they are on too many other committees, and nominees who pursue sectional interests rather than concern themselves with the education and training matters of their industry.
>
> (Fleming et al 1973, p.10)

More recent Australian research has documented continuing problems of involvement. Hall has observed:

> .... employers do not attend (they quickly tire of the lack of progress and the use of jargon) and the major emphasis is on process rather than product
>
> (Hall 1988, p.36)

In contrast however, Grannall (1985) found that only 21% of members considered that meetings were slow and boring.

Hunter and Austen, researching advisory committee structures, concluded:

> It is not surprising that employers and unionists have questioned the demands made on their time for activities that are duplicated by various government supported agencies.
>
> (Hunter and Austen 1984, p.15)

The problem is not unique to Australia. From the United Kingdom Tolley has reported:

> ... spent an enormous amount of time trying to develop, encourage and nurture relationships with employers .... but we got an insufficient and largely ineffective response from employers,
>
> (Tolley 1985, p.585)

while Theodossin, commenting on the expectation of the recent Green Paper that there be more employer representation on the boards of governors (councils) of further education colleges, stated:

> Whether or not employers will take up these seats is another question - certainly some of our projects have indicated that governors seem worried about having financial responsibility and would prefer to operate without the burden of public accountability.
> (Theodossin 1988, p.525)

Allowing that there may be some reluctance to participate, nevertheless the available research evidence does not support the notion of college council efficacy. Hall's (1988) research showed that "the overwhelming evidence from the interviews ... industry is keen to strengthen its links with colleges (Hall 1988, p.44) and clearly indicated where these linkages should best be made:

> In the short term it is individual college links with individual industries that will be most effective in promoting TAFE/Industry liaison
> (Hall 1988, p.36)

but he made no specific recommendations as to how colleges might best take on this function.

From parallel research, part of the same project as Hall above, Sheldrake concluded:

> From a college point of view, interaction with industry and successful long term links, are very much a function of individuals and their capacity to maintain gooodwill and an effective network
> (Sheldrake 1988, p.11)

but qualified this with

> The widely held view is that the majority of TAFE staff are ill-equipped to promote more effective liaison between industry and colleges.
> (Sheldrake 1988, p.20)

The combined outcomes of these two studies might be paraphrased as, industry wants closer links with TAFE; individual colleges appear to be the most appropriate level of organization through which such links should be fostered; the linkages at present depend on the talents of individual TAFE staff; but, the majority of TAFE staff are viewed as ill-equipped for such a role.

3.3 Representativeness of college councils

The representativeness of college councils and role of individual members has been the subject of considerable research in the United States. Mann (1974) researched the role of individual college council members in making decisions and found that 61 per cent acted in a "trustee" capacity, that is, their decisions were based on their own values. The remaining 39 per cent acted as "delegates", making decisions on the basis of the constituency they represented. He also found that the greater the degree to which the council was proportionately representative of its community then the greater the degree to which individuals tended to act as trustees. Other research (Meier and England, 1984) indicates that representativeness influences the decision-making and policy of councils. However, representativeness must extend beyond mere proportionality. In Victoria, Watkins (1988) examined the notion of "representative democracy" and cautioned that representatives must do more than simply fulfill statistical descriptions. The important considerations for representatives are what they do and how they formulate their role rather than who they are.

Among the groups that one might wish to see represented on college councils are the disadvantaged. The TAFEAC Report for the 1988-90 Triennium recognised the special need for access for groups such as Aborigines, migrants, women and the unemployed, but made no recommendation for consultation or representation of these groups. Although it provides no evidence of specific research into the difficulties of achieving adequate represention for disadvantaged groups, the NSW discussion paper included a number of commonly held assumptions:

> There is also the problem of reaching the disadvantaged and less articulate groups in the community. Such groups have difficulty in identifying and articulating their own needs even in informal situations. It is likely that they are loathe to become involved with formal committees or, if they do come forward, lack confidence in pressing their own interests.
>
> (Quoted in Woodburne 1982, p.56)

Grannall (1985) was unable to assess whether or not councils in NSW were representative of each local community, but did note that current members considered that the present emphasis on representation from rural, commercial and industrial interests should be retained along with increased representation from college staff.

TAFEAC also identified the need for the interests of individual students to be taken into account (CTEC, 1987b). There may be some danger in a simple assumption that the needs of students will be automatically taken care of by "other" council representatives who "present their desires as the perceived needs of young people" (Melling 1985, p.353). Australian research (O'Brien, Slater and Stefanovic 1984) similarly reported substantial differences between staff and student perceptions of what a TAFE college was doing and what they believed it ought to be doing. Grannall (1985) reported from his research in NSW that students interviewed "were generally not aware that a college committee existed" (p.85)

3.4 Effectiveness of college councils

Hermann, et al (1976) suggested that there are good grounds for believing many college councils in Australia are ineffective, a view supported at least partially by Grannall who reported:

> ... a significant percentage of District Council and College Committee members did not feel competent to give advice in a wide range of areas.
>
> (Grannall 1985, p.93)

In the same study Department of TAFE staff rated the competence of members as very low across a wide range of potential council functions, including resource allocation within colleges, the purchase of materials and equipment and the selection of teaching staff.

Nevertheless, there is also evidence which suggests at least some areas of effective operation. Grannall's study found that both council members and TAFE staff viewed members' competence as high in the areas of publicity (although members indicated that such matters were discussed infrequently at meetings), need and demand for new courses, and sporting and recreational issues.(1985, p.96)

Hall found "excellent examples of effective relationships in TAFE course development" (1988, p.43), while Harvey, evaluating the role of councils in NSW, described them as "lynch pins" that "keep college programs in tune with local community/industry need" (1986, p.3). The view of TAFE Victoria, as submitted to VIPSEC for the 1985-87 triennium, is that councils are expected:

> to incorporate liaison with industry and community groups

> to enable prompt response to their needs for programs.
> (Quoted in Beswick et al 1983, p.92)

Grannall's study identified local labour market intelligence as an important function of councils, but also reported the perception of some critics that:

> ... insufficient time was spent by Councils on issues such as the introduction of new courses into the district which was where their local knowledge could be most effectively utilized.
> (Grannall 1985, p.82)

Tolley (1985) similarly noted the importance of the "local labour market intelligence" role of councils in the United Kingdom, as did Scharf (1986) in Canada. Not all of the evidence is as positive regarding this role. Theodossin, Deputy Director of the Responsive College Program in the United Kingdom, has observed that:

> There is some disgruntlement that employers do not seem to be very good at identifying future developments. Sometimes companies may 'know' but be reluctant to say ... not much information emerges through this route.
> (Theodossin 1988, p.524-5)

In the United States, research by the New York Board of Education concluded that the devolution of responsibility to college councils should make the system "more readily responsive" (Mann 1974). Similarly Gold emphasised the labour market/responsiveness function:

> ... maintaining a labour supply 'aligned' with the market demand requires the participation of knowledgeable business, labour and education leaders ... forecasting the economic development and employment needs of the local economy,
> (Gold 1981, p.3)

and concluded his research with,

> The particular value of local collaborative Councils is that they are located where specific problems touch specific individuals and institutions and where any solutions proposed for those problems must be implemented.
> (Gold 1981, p.10)

The role of councils in curriculum has also been endorsed by practitioners, although corroborating research has not been cited. TAFE Victoria in a submission to VIPSEC identified short course planning, experimental curriculum projects and assessment of local teaching techniques as appropriate council activities (Beswick et al 1983), while Tolley (1985) concluded that there was a need for more involvement of industry in design and development at the local level. Tolley also has identified the importance of councils as a source of contact to facilitate the return of teaching staff to industry to maintain their technical competence. Learning is also said to be affected. Gold concluded:

> Individual learners will be motivated to develop academic and vocational skills if ... learning is closely linked in the learner's mind to relevant people, places and opportunities in the immediate community.
>
> (Gold 1981, p.3)

The role of councils as lobbyists on behalf of the college has been rarely addressed in the published research. Coatesworth, in the United Kingdom, provided anecdotal evidence:

> By working through a governing body pressures can be brought that could not otherwise be brought.
>
> (Coatesworth 1979, p.561)

The only research evidence found in the literature reported similar findings:

> ... local administrators reported using their local advisory committees as advocacy groups. Members of the local advisory committee can sometimes influence the Board of Education and district more than the vocational administrator ...
>
> (Starr et al 1980, p.9)

3.5 Means of improving college council effectiveness

The paucity of research extends to the processes or mechanisms which might be employed to bring about more effective college councils. Hermann et al (1976) identified a number of negative factors, including:

> ... committees are too large, meet too infrequently for their members to develop sufficient expertise, and many of their members find that membership is an added unwelcome burden to already demanding careers. Often members have achieved executive status in the organizations but have lost real contact with the occupational field on which they are advising. Too often their deliberations are never made public for community comment nor are their recommendations available for discussion by students and teachers prior to their acceptance or rejection.
>
> (Hermann et al 1976, p.73-74)

Grannall (1985) also identified a number of negative factors including a trend towards increased politicisation of council membership (p.85); a lack of clarity by all parties as to the intended function of councils (p.90); insufficient time for discussion of substantive issues (p.93); and insufficient feedback to council members on the outcomes of discussion and decisions they had made.(p.100)

Much of the literature emphasises the need for genuine partnership between college and community if a council is to succeed. Thomas (1985) included as the basis of his conceptual model, the principles of shared understanding, shared responsibility, shared resources and shared benefits, and stated that there must be an intention of contributing to each partner achieving its respective goals. Scharf (1986) commented that "Partnership is based on the assumption of joint ownership, is on-going ... is formalised ... is based on shared authority ..." and warned TAFE-type institutions that they

> ... need industry more than industry needs the institution. If there are no new jobs nor no demand for retraining ... institutions have no customers. Employers have a range of alternatives for their training.
>
> (Scharf 1986, p.7)

Sheldrake's research indicates that Australian employers respond, perhaps implicitly, to the notion of partnership. He noted that:

> Industry reacts positively to those who demonstrate they can make an effective contribution by being responsive to the needs of a particular company or industry group in relation to training, or by maintaining on-going liaison, so that each keeps in touch with the other's views and concerns and information exchange is sustained.
>
> (Sheldrake 1988, p.44)

However, his research also indicates that industry commitment to a system will be limited if it is assigned only an advisory role. For a number of reasons, genuine partnerships are frequently not fostered. Mann lays part of the blame for this at the feet of principals. He notes, that "The data suggests that belief in personal expertise is a powerful rationale for ignoring the relevance of other people's participation in educational decisions", and therefore "The more expertise school administrators believe they possess, the more they are likely to view their own trustee-like decision making as sufficient." (Mann 1974, p.311-2) Consequently, he continues, "interaction with the community is not seen as shared decision-making, but rather as an exercise in public relations." (Mann 1974, p.312)

Hermann, et al (1976), acknowledge that college principals sometimes withdraw from meaningful participation by their constituencies, but provide a more lenient interpretation:

> it is not difficult to see that full-time officers of the further education systems might justifiably be wary about the advice of those whom they would see as outsiders

> interfering in matters which they often do not understand and who do not have to live with the practical consequences of their recommendations.
>
> (Hermann et al 1976, p.73-4)

One consequence of paying only lip-service to involvement and participation by external stakeholders is that the role and function of councils is frequently more rhetoric than reality. Most of what happens is

> ... the program staff telling industry what has been happening to the programs. The intention, of course, is the exact opposite.
>
> (Scharf 1986, p.7)

or,

> ... all the employers were expected to do was listen to reports about how successful the college had been in the past year.
>
> (Theodossin 1988, p.526)

Gold believes that isolationist behaviours by college principals are doomed to failure, and suggests that openness to the college's community does not necessarily imply a loss of professional integrity, rather, "educational leadership is crucial if shared responsibility is to result in greater institutional effectiveness." (1981, p.2)

Genuine partnership may be difficult to achieve for a second set of reasons. In Australia each state has, in essence, a centralised TAFE system. The TAFE system as a whole is expected to be an active agency of government policy and in the current economic environment that means, among other things, efficiency of operation and restraint in expenditure of public monies. Concurrently, at the individual college level, councils are expected to adequately represent the needs of their local community/industry. It is a situation inherent with contradictions. In Victoria the situation has been described by Watkins as,

> ... while institutions such as regional boards are ostensibly based on the premise of participation, collaboration and greater community involvement, there are underlying concerns with economic efficiency and corporate structures that seem to be the ultimate factors guiding the direction of education. The endeavour of the Government to be seen as good economic managers would appear to place severe restriction on the involvement of the comunity.
>
> (Watkins 1988, p.20)

and the same tensions would appear to be equally operative in all other states and territories.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research objectives and design

The objective of the research was to investigate the function and role of college councils and from this to identify strategies, structures and practices that are linked to effective local community participation in TAFE.

The research design adopted incorporated two distinct elements, a single survey by questionnaire of the entire population of TAFE colleges and a single round of interviews of members of selected college councils. This particular design was intended to generate two distinct perspectives on the operation of college councils: the perspective of council members themselves and their evaluation of their contribution to the management and operation of their particular college, and the college principals' perspective of the contribution made by council to college management and operation.

4.2 Limitations of the research design

The research design is exceedingly simple. In essence it is a report at a single point in time and although the evidence was gathered with every effort to maintain complete objectivity, nevertheless its findings must be treated with caution. The findings are vulnerable to the threats of history, maturation and selection. They simply record strategies, structures and practices which occurred in conjunction. Although causation may be inferred, a far more rigorous research design would be required before the results could be viewed with a substantial level of confidence. Campbell and Stanley (1962), commenting on the validity and reliability of research designs in terms of the generalizability of results, state unequivocally that they are

> ... committed to the experiment: as the only means for settling disputes regarding educational practices, as the only way of verifying education improvements, and as the only way of establishing a cumulative tradition in which

> improvements can be introduced without the danger of faddish discard of old wisdom in favour of inferior novelties.
>
> (Campbell and Stanley 1962, p.2)

This is a perspective broadly endorsed by the author.

Nevertheless this is not to suggest that the results reported in this study are without meaning. They provide information which was correct at a particular point in time and which may suggest strategies, structures and processes which may be subject to trial in other college councils. Further, to the extent that similar research may occur in the future and common relevant attributes identified, these findings may contribute to the construction of theory or generalizations.

4.3 Interviews

The "internal" perspective on the operation of councils was canvassed by interview with 55 members of college councils from seven colleges located in three states. The colleges selected included both metropolitan and country colleges in each of NSW, Victoria and Western Australia.

It was the intention of this study to identify structures, functions and processes that contributed to an effective college council operation. The colleges where interviews were held were therefore selected on the basis that they appeared to have an effective council in place. Advice on the identification of effective councils was sought in each of the three states from a number of sources. From the lists of council names provided (there were several from each state) an arbitrary selection was made. Only to this extent the information obtained in the interviews has been deliberately biassed as a consequence of the research design.

In each college where interviews were to be held the college principal was requested to arrange between eight and ten interviews with council members. (See Appendix 1) In each case the principal was requested to include him/herself in the interview group, as well as the chairperson of the council and a staff representative on the council. The interviewees included 42 men and 13 women.

Each interview took approximately 45 minutes and followed a loose structure; however where a response suggested a different line of thought this was followed. With the permission of interviewees a tape recording of each interview was made for subsequent transcription. Each interviewee was promised confidentiality and anonymity, but permission was sought, and granted, to use direct, non-attributed quotes where these appeared particularly appropriate.

4.4 Survey questionnaire

The "college" perspective on the involvement and efficacy of councils was obtained through a 48 item questionnaire (attached at Appendix 2). The individual items sought information on a range of matters, some purely statistical such as the size of council and the frequency of meetings. Other items required the respondent to list in order of priority a number of alternatives, while the majority of items required the respondent to rate a number of activities, competencies and outcomes on a Likert-type scale which included verbal descriptors for every pair of points.

Typical examples of this latter group of items include:

4. What role does the College Council play in making decisions on capital works in the college?

Total Responsibility		Strong Recommendation		Provide Advice		No Role Whatsoever	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

5. How do you assess the competence of the College Council to make decisions on College capital works?

Total Competence		Considerable Competence		Little Competence		No Competence	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Respondents were asked to circle the point on the scale which most accurately matched their perception of their college's council and its operation. An eight point scale was deliberately chosen to "force" a choice between the positive and negative ends of the scale.

The questionnaire also included one open-ended item which invited respondents to comment on any aspect of council operation.

The questionnaire was developed after interviews had been held in two councils and although the individual items included were based primarily on the literature, they were modified by the experience gained during these interviews. The draft instrument was read by two college principals and a senior TAFE researcher and some minor amendments made to item wording before the questionnaire was distributed.

The primary concerns in designing the questionnaire were that it generate valid and reliable information and that a single instrument be used for all states in order that a national perspective emerge. It was recognised that the use of a single instrument presented distinct limitations because of the considerable differences in the legal standing and operation of councils in different states and territories; however, it was believed that the value of a national perspective outweighed the limitations.

The questionnaire was distributed to 201 TAFE colleges. The distribution excluded the two colleges where interviews had already taken place; those colleges which were concerned exclusively with an "external" mode delivery; and also three independent "community" colleges in Western Australia. With these minor exceptions the survey sample included the total population of TAFE colleges in Australia.

Principals were promised that all information would be treated with complete confidentiality and to this end the questionnaires were distributed without any means of identification. However, the majority of returns received sought no anonymity. Almost two thirds of all responses included some form of positive identification inserted by the college administration, ranging from "with compliments" slips to signed addendums offering further assistance or clarification if required.

The questionnaire response rate was higher than expected from a mailed survey. One mailing only, of 201 questionnaires, took place and 152 responses, 75.6 per cent, were returned. By way of comparison, recent published research from the TAFE National Centre indicates response rates of "approximately 80 per cent" (Edwards and Gould 1988, p.14), 46 per cent (Binns 1989, p.17), 57 per cent (Hall 1987, p.33) and 23 per cent (Guthrie and

Krzemionka 1987, p.13) and in a CTEC sponsored study, 57 per cent (Bardsley and Gallagher 1987, p.21).

5. SURVEY RESULTS

5.1 Questionnaire returns

Respondents returned 152 questionnaires. Although it was not intended that the respondents be identified, 95 returns included the name of the college of origin. When compared to the distribution list it indicated that the return was representative across all states. Table 5.1 lists the distribution and return rate of the questionnaires.

State	Distributed	% Distributed	Returned	% of Returns
NSW	99	49.3	33	21.7
Q	25	12.4	20	13.2
SA	21	10.4	11	7.2
TAS	3	1.5		
VIC	33	16.4	19	12.5
WA	15	7.5	9	5.9
ACT	1	0.5	1	0.7
NT	4	2.0	2	1.3
UNKNOWN			57	37.5
	201	100.0	152	100.0

Table 5.1 Questionnaire distribution and return by state.

Of the 152 colleges which responded, 139 indicated either that a college council existed or was in the process of being established. To the extent that they could be identified, those colleges in the process of establishing councils appeared to be located primarily in Queensland. As indicated previously, (2.3), the establishment of councils in Queensland became mandatory only in 1988.

5.2 Council size and frequency of meeting

The majority of college councils have 13 to 17 members. The

Council Size	NSW	Q	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	ACT	NT	UNKNOWN	%
<8	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.5
8 - 12	8	2	1	-	-	4	-	-	11	19.4
13 - 17	12	7	9	-	8	4	-	1	31	53.7
>17	10	1	1	-	11	-	1	1	9	25.4

Table 5.2 Distribution of college council size by State. n= 134.

remainder are fairly evenly distributed between those having less than 13 or more than 17 members. To the extent that they were identifiable, most of the larger councils were located in either NSW or Victoria. (See Table 5.2)

The frequency of meetings was also obtained from the survey. The vast majority of councils met either 3 to 6 times per year (n = 70; 51.5%) or more than 6 times a year (n = 63; 46.3%). Written comments attached to a number of the responses indicated that nearly all councils which met more than 6 times a year in fact met on a monthly basis except in the summer vacation period.

5.3 College rating of council functions

The questionnaire addressed the role of councils across a number of functions as suggested by the Acts or Regulations under which councils have been established or by the literature. For each function, college administrators were asked to estimate the degree to which their council was involved in that particular activity; how they perceived the council's competency to be involved in that activity; and to rank in order the three most important of the nine functions listed. The results are shown in Tables 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5.

For the country as a whole, the "lobbying" function is rated as that in which councils play the largest role, (Table 5.3, mean score), the function in which they are most competent, (Table 5.4, mean score) and the most important function in

Function	Rating of Involvement							Mean	Std	F	DF	F
	NSW	Vic	Q	WA	SA	ACT/	Other		Dev	score		prob
Capital works	5.25	2.36	5.45	5.50	6.27	4.00	4.58	4.67	1.68	13.02	135	.0000
Equipment	5.29	3.94	5.54	5.37	6.81	5.67	5.37	5.29	1.66	3.62	135	.0014
Staffing	7.12	3.00	5.63	6.87	6.90	2.00	6.56	6.08	2.05	18.16	135	.0000
Finance	5.87	2.00	5.09.	5.75	6.27	4.00	5.28	5.02	2.01	13.45	135	.0000
Curriculum	6.71	4.52	4.90	6.00	6.72	3.33	6.11	5.91	1.75	5.57	135	.0000
Planning	5.12	2.10	4.81	5.25	5.09	2.33	4.61	4.42	1.87	8.14	134	.0000
Lobbying	3.51	2.44	3.45	4.25	3.36	2.33	3.45	3.35	1.28	2.45	134	.0214
Pub. relat.	4.22	3.52	3.54	5.00	4.00	3.33	4.03	4.01	1.37	1.40	135	.2091
Watchdog	4.54	2.10	4.27	5.00	4.90	2.00	4.37	4.11	1.88	5.76	135	.0000
N =	31	19	11	8	11	3	53	136				

Table 5.3 One way analysis of variance, college administrator's rating of council involvement by state.
(N= is maximum response from each source)

Function	Assessment of Competence							Mean	Std	F	DF	F
	NSW	Vic	Q	WA	SA	ACT/ NT	Other		Dev	score		prob
Capital works	4.66	2.63	3.90	4.62	5.18	3.67	4.01	4.08	1.36	6.72	134	.0000
Equipment	4.50	3.72	4.27	4.12	5.00	3.67	4.69	4.45	1.47	1.25	131	.2797
Staffing	5.48	2.89	4.09	4.14	4.80	2.67	5.14	4.62	1.94	4.86	123	.0001
Finance	4.53	2.47	3.90	4.12	4.70	3.33	4.58	4.16	1.74	4.51	131	.0002
Curriculum	5.60	4.10	4.09	4.62	4.60	3.67	5.19	4.91	1.65	2.51	130	.0188
Planning	4.13	2.52	3.81	3.57	3.72	3.00	4.07	3.76	1.55	2.59	131	.0157
Lobbying	3.32	2.26	2.54	3.12	3.00	3.00	3.13	2.99	1.26	2.15	135	.0427
Pub. relat.	3.70	3.52	3.09	3.75	3.36	2.67	3.52	3.51	1.23	0.80	135	.5847
Watchdog	3.93	2.47	3.54	3.37	4.09	2.67	3.68	3.55	1.38	2.71	132	.0119
N =	33	19	11	8	11	3	57	136				

Table 5.4 One way analysis of variance, college administrators assessment of council competency by state.
(N= is maximum response from any source)

which they engage. (Table 5.5). The result is not surprising in view of the almost continuous struggle for resources waged by most TAFE institutions and the often highly political nature of resource allocation.

The second largest role of councils is seen to be the closely related "public relations" function, which is also rated as the function in which councils exhibit their second greatest competency. Third largest role and third highest competency is the "community watchdog" brief, while involvement in planning and planning competency are both rated fourth. In terms of college administrator's perceptions of the importance of these last three functions, (public relations, community watchdog, planning), there is little to discriminate. All three were accorded similar priorities, considerably behind lobbying, but considerably in front of the remaining functions.

Council involvement in the remaining five functions was rated in decreasing activity from capital works decisions, through finance, equipment, curriculum to staffing. All of these were assessed as functions in which councils exercised "no role" through to "providing advice". College perceptions of council competency in these same functions followed an almost identical order; however, in the case of capital works and finance it is clear that colleges regard councils as having considerable competence even though they do not play a large role in either function. In terms of ranked importance as council activities, finance and capital works were ranked by many colleges as important activities, but equipment (8 mentions), staffing (5 mentions) and curriculum (4 mentions) were rarely listed.

5.4 Statistical significance of college ratings

College rating of council involvement and competency across the nine functions were tested for differences between the states using one way analysis of variance. The results are shown in Tables 5.3 and 5.4.

Not all college returns could be identified by state and consequently 53 colleges have been grouped together under the heading "other". To this extent the analysis which follows is incomplete and some caution should be exercised in interpreting the results. Nevertheless, the results are quite striking. Referring to the identified states and disregarding the "other"

Function/ Priority	N colleges ranking priority							Total
	NSW	Vic	Q	WA	SA	ACT/ NT	Other	
Capital works								
1	1	1					5	7
2	2	1					4	7
3	2	2		1			3	8
Total	5	4		1			12	22
Overall priority	5	5		6				6
Staffing								
1								
2		2						2
3		3						3
Total		5						5
Overall priority		5						8
Curriculum								
1				1				1
2			2					2
3	1		1					2
Total	1		3	1				5
Overall priority	8		5	5				9
Public relations								
1	10		4	2	1	1	14	32
2	7		1	1	4		10	23
3	6	1	2	1	3	1	8	22
Total	23	1	7	4	8	2	32	77
Overall priority	1	7	2	3	3	2		3
Watchdog								
1	8	3		2	1	1	10	25
2	8	2	3		4		5	22
3	5	2	2	2	6		13	30
Total	21	7	5	4	11	1	28	77
Overall priority	2	4	4	4	2	4		4
Equipment								
1								
2	1						3	4
3	1	1		1			2	5
Total	2	1		1			5	9
Overall priority	6	7		6				7

(Cont.)

Function/ Priority	N colleges ranking priority							Total
	NSW	Vic	Q	WA	SA	ACT/ NT	Other	
Finance								
1		7					2	9
2	1	5			1		9	17
3	1	2	1			1	3	7
Total	2	14	1		1	1	14	33
Overall priority	6	1	6		5	4		5
Lobbying								
1	7	1	4	3	5		13	33
2	5	5	3	3	1	2	12	31
3	10	4	3	1	2		13	33
Total	22	10	10	7	8	2	38	97
Overall priority	3	3	1	1	1	2		1
Planning								
1	4	7	3		4	1	9	20
2	6	4	2	4	1		10	27
3	4	4	2	2		2	11	25
Total	14	15	7	6	5	3	30	80
Overall priority	4	1	3	2	3	1		2

Table 5.5 College administrator's ranking of importance of nine council functions, by state.

category, Victorian college councils are rated as more involved in each of the nine functions than the corresponding organizations in the other states - generally by a considerable margin. At the other end of the scale, less involved, there is little to discriminate between NSW, Queensland, WA and SA. The means on each function for each of these states are generally clustered closely together while the Standard Deviations, although not shown in Tables 5.3 or 5.4, indicate considerable homogeneity of responses. For six of these nine functions there are significant differences between the states at the <.0000 level; one function is significant at <.001; a further function is significant at <.05. It would appear that Victoria is the source of the differences.

The assessment of council competency is similarly striking. Victorian councils again feature prominently at the "more" end of the scale and have been rated by their college administrators as the most competent on seven of the nine functions, although generally not by the same wide margin as for involvement. At the other end of the scale NSW features prominently, with councils from that state assessed as either least competent (functions 3, 5, 6, 7) or second least competent (functions 1, 2, 4, 8, 9) on every scale. The differences between the states are statistically significant at <.0000, one function; <.001, two functions; <.01, three functions; and, <.05, one function. It would appear that Victoria is again the source of the differences.

The two tables are not strictly comparable. One table seeks a rating of involvement, the other an assessment of competence. They are comparable only to the extent that both address the same functions on an eight point Likert-type scale. Bearing this caveat in mind, it is nevertheless interesting that only Victorian councils are rated and assessed at approximately the same level of involvement and competence. In all other states the assessment of council competency is considerably higher than the rating of council involvement, suggesting that colleges recognise a potential that is at present not fully utilised.

College priorities across the nine functions (Table 5.5) were tested by state of origin using Chi-square. Only one variable, "Involvement in financial decisions", recorded a significant difference by state. Of the 34 colleges which ranked this function as one of their three top priorities, 14 were identified as Victorian. Alternatively, of the 19 colleges which were identified as Victorian, 14 ranked it as one of their top three priorities. The result clearly reflects the distinctive legal position that Victorian councils have enjoyed for a number of years.

Most other college priorities by identified state tend to be clustered around comparable rankings with the exception of the "public relations" function which has been accorded a much lower priority by Victoria than other states; however, the difference is not statistically significant.

5.5 Comment on college ratings of council functions

The lowly rating and ranking by colleges, of council involvement, competence and importance in decisions relating to equipment, curriculum and staffing is in contrast to the present rhetoric which calls for greater community involvement. If groups such as employers and unions, and the community at large, have the best appreciation of what programs TAFE should deliver, as is often stated, then their most beneficial involvement with TAFE is almost certainly in the area of curriculum, particularly in providing advice on the types of programs and courses that should be offered. This is clearly not perceived to be the case with existing college councils.

The absence of involvement at the council level is somewhat ameliorated by the existence of college-community networks, sometimes formal, but most often not, which provide some level of influence on college activity. The informal network, however, while important and not to be discarded, is also personality-based, subject to considerable variation, and clearly not what employers, unions and the Commonwealth government are seeking.

5.6 College ratings of council processes

College administrators were asked a series of questions on processes and structures which might influence the operation of their college council and the direction/degree to which these processes and structures affected outcomes. The results, which are broken down by state, are listed in Table 5.6.

The most conspicuous feature of the results is the almost complete absence of significant differences in influence or outcome between the states. There are significant differences in the rating of the outcomes of the degree of goal definition and in the rating of the outcomes of the degree of local orientation, but the differences are in the variance rather than the means. (Lack of space precluded listing the standard deviations in Table 5.6. In the two sets of variables, the means of goal definition and goal definition outcomes are very similar both state by state and total by total, but the standard deviations are 1.74 and 1.15 respectively. The results are almost identical for local orientation and local orientation outcomes: standard deviations of 1.46 and 1.16 respectively.)

Accepting that there is a relative homogeneity of perception

Process/ Structure	mean college rating process/structure								F score	DF	F prob
	NSW	Vic	Q	WA	SA	ACT/ NT	Other	All			
Defined goals	4.35	2.68	3.10	4.62	3.81	2.67	4.04	3.83	0.77	135	.6094
Goals outcome	3.71	2.68	3.10	4.00	3.80	3.00	3.72	3.51	2.44	122	.0225
Local orientation	2.96	2.70	3.00	4.25	3.30	2.00	3.42	3.19	1.49	128	.1780
Orientation outcome	2.58	2.73	3.00	3.28	3.60	2.00	3.49	3.10	2.73	122	.0118
Chairperson influence	3.96	4.11	3.80	3.62	4.54	3.00	3.86	3.93	0.48	130	.8456
Chairperson outcome	3.07	3.39	2.90	2.75	3.30	3.00	3.22	3.16	0.35	125	.9295
Membership influence	2.81	2.79	3.30	2.62	3.00	2.33	2.92	2.87	0.44	132	.8738
Membership outcome	3.17	2.52	2.80	2.87	3.09	3.00	3.37	3.09	0.97	130	.4539
Size influence	4.53	4.00	3.80	4.75	4.81	5.00	4.19	4.32	0.74	132	.6384
Size outcome	3.78	3.52	3.60	4.00	3.60	3.67	3.66	3.67	0.21	127	.9817
Meet. freq. influence	3.63	3.21	3.60	3.62	3.36	3.67	3.60	3.53	0.24	131	.9723
Frequency outcome	3.57	3.11	3.60	3.37	3.18	3.33	3.42	3.39	0.63	127	.7326
Maximum N= from each source	31	19	11	8	11	3	53	136			

Table 5.6 Means and one way analysis of variance, process and structure by influence and outcome by state.

among college administrators, it is evident that colleges perceive the composition of council membership as a very strong influence on the council's activities with the outcomes resulting from this composition being strongly positive.

The influence and importance of council membership composition was elaborated on by many respondents who volunteered written comments. Typically these comments emphasized the correlation between council membership and council efficacy:

> ... effectiveness is directly related to the type of people on the council (NSW)

and

> ... the value of college councils is related directly to the competence of members .. (NSW)

or,

> ... where formed by people with a genuine interest and empathy for TAFE ... [councils are] of overwhelming benefit to students, community and the Dept. of TAFE (NSW)

Close behind membership composition as an influence is the desire for local community enhancement. College administrators rated this as a strong influence on the operations of the council and as an even stronger positive influence on the outcomes of council operations. Written comments, not unexpectedly, indicated that this was a stronger influence in rural/country areas than in city areas; however, an analysis of variance revealed no significant difference between city and country responses. This would appear to be supported by the relatively small standard deviations for these two sets of variables (reported above) which are indicative of homogeneity in the responses.

The frequency of council meetings, the existence of well-defined goals, and the influence of the management of the council chairperson, in that order, were all rated as of "some influence" on the operations of the college council. Both frequency and goal definition were also rated as positive influences on the outcomes of council activities. The influence of the council chairperson on the outcomes was rated as "strongly positive" and was seen as important as both the composition of council membership and local community enhancement in terms of council outcomes. In view of the lower rating given to the influence of the chairperson on council operations, colleges appear to be endorsing the role of chairperson as one of ability to manage meetings, but not dominating the agenda nor direction of council.

The final factor rated by colleges - size of councils, was seen as relatively neutral in terms of influence, but as positive in terms of outcomes. This result is interpreted as indicating that the size of the council is not seen to have any particular effect on council processes, but that it can have a positive effect on council efficacy.

5.7 College ratings of other aspects of council operation

The survey sought information on a number of other aspects of council operation, the results of which are shown in Table 5.7. These were subject to analysis of variance by state, but only one significant difference was registered (<.05) on the variable "influence of the principal". The absence of significant differences in the variance and the relative closeness of the state means on all variables suggests that the results, with the exception of principal's influence, can be treated as a single national group.

Other variables	mean college rating other variables								F score	DF	F prob
	NSW	Vic	Q	WA	SA	ACT/ NT	Other	All			
Origin of activity	5.42	5.11	5.18	6.00	5.09	5.33	5.13	5.29	0.77	135	.6094
Sounding board	2.39	2.32	2.45	3.00	3.18	1.67	2.94	2.68	1.45	135	.1917
Rubber stamp	4.45	5.26	6.00	4.25	5.54	4.67	4.89	4.94	1.92	135	.0717
Principal's influence	2.63	2.57	3.60	2.12	3.00	3.67	3.11	2.91	2.83	133	.0143
Representativeness	3.51	2.72	3.00	3.50	3.09	3.33	3.28	3.23	0.64	134	.7205
TAFE culture	4.76	4.83	4.88	4.75	5.45	5.33	4.57	4.78	0.65	130	.7101
Member orientation	5.37	4.57	4.77	5.12	5.18	6.00	5.41	5.21	0.87	131	.5334
Member staff develop.	5.96	5.05	5.50	5.62	5.90	6.33	6.05	5.82	1.01	133	.4284
Maximum N* from each source	31	19	11	8	11	3	53	136			

Table 5.7 Means and one way analysis of variance, other variables by state.

Viewed nationally, these indicate a strong consensus that council activity is initiated primarily from within colleges and that principals, on average, "very strongly" influence the operations of the council. This is not to suggest that councils act simply as "rubber stamps" for decisions made previously by college administrators. Although this was rated as the case "to some degree", it is clear that colleges believe councils play a much more important role than rubber stamping decisions made elsewhere, and in fact act as an important sounding board for college initiatives.

Although the differences were not statistically significant, the state means indicate that college administrators in both NSW and WA regard councils as more of a rubber stamp than do their colleagues in other states.

In terms of the principal's influence on council operations, Victorian and WA administrators rate their influence as greater than do their colleagues in other states.

The findings, particularly those relating to the "sounding board" role of councils, are supported by the volunteered written comments. The following comment from one college encapsulates the statistical findings succinctly:

> [The Director should] .... be an active council member, but not dominate ...
> (Victoria)

Elsewhere, one Principal wrote

> [I am] greatly supported, comforted, influenced and guided by .... council. (NSW)

and another

> [council] offer help and assistance ... largely by support, advice ... (WA).

The extent to which councils are constrained by the difficulties of coming to grips with TAFE's unique culture and the widespread use of acronyms was also addressed. Colleges indicated that there is some degree of ineffectiveness in the first year of membership as a result; however, colleges appear to have done little in terms of providing orientation programs and even less in terms of providing development programs for council members. Although one state (NSW) makes specific provision for council member staff development programs, and a second state (Victoria) has a TAFE College Councils Association which offers council members staff development programs, analysis of the returns indicated no significant difference between the states in the provision of staff development or orientation.

5.8 Council "representativeness"

College administrator rating was sought on the extent to which council membership was representative of the college community. (Table 5.7) There was a strong consensus that membership was "largely representative"; however, a number of colleges also provided written comments suggesting means by which membership could be made more representative. Essentially these centred on the notion of a greater involvement by the principal in the process, such as

> ... could be more representative of the community if the principal was able to nominate for the the Minister's selection those people with specific skills who may not bother to apply to be on the committee, but may accept a position if asked by the Minister.
> (Queensland)

and

> ... [the principal] could encourage a cross-section of

> community representatives to nominate so that it would provide a truer reflection of community needs ... (NSW)

5.9 Selection of membership

Elsewhere in the survey, colleges were asked to prioritise how council membership should be determined. Of the four options listed "nomination by community, selection by Minister" was marginally favoured over "nomination by principal, selection by Minister". Further behind, but still the first or second preference of 31 principals, (20.8% of all respondents) was "selection by principal". Only one principal listed "direct election by community" as first choice and this option was ignored by most respondents. Colleges were also offered the opportunity to write in other alternatives and 47 suggestions were received. Of these almost half suggested "nomination by council, selection by Minister" and almost half suggested some form of co-option. In both cases, the majority of these suggestions came from Victoria and South Australia and reflect the established procedures in those states.

5.10 College ratings of council power and influence

Colleges were asked to assess the degree to which councils influenced college operations and whether councils had too much or too little power for the good management of the college. The results, listed in Table 5.8, indicate a significant difference between the states, with Victorian administrators rating council influence as in the range "substantially", whereas their colleagues in the other states rated council influence across a narrow range almost precisely midway between "some" and "substantially". The variation in influence is not unexpected given the legal status of councils in Victoria.

With respect to "too much" or "too little" power, five colleges indicated their belief that councils already possessed too much power (four from NSW, one "unknown"), while 44 colleges indicated a belief that councils had too little power (NSW 10; Vic 7; SA 6; WA 5; "unknown" 16). College administrators' perceptions of council power and responses to the items "amount of influence exercised by councils" and "what difference if councils ceased to exist" were subjected to analysis using the SPSS program "Crosstabulations". All five colleges which rated councils as having "too much" power also believed that it would

Variables	mean college rating variables								F score	DF	F prob
	NSW	Vic	Q	WA	SA	ACT/ NT	Other	All			
Council influence	4.77	3.15	4.40	5.25	4.72	2.00	4.49	4.37	4.91	134	.0001
Real difference if council disappeared	4.48	2.63	3.50	5.37	4.72	2.67	4.15	4.05	2.51	133	.0187
Maximum N= from each source	31	19	11	8	11	3	53	136			

Table 5.8 Means and analysis of variance, council influence and difference if council disappeared, by state.

make "no real difference" if councils disappeared. Surprisingly, the same colleges generally believed that councils exercised minimal influence on college operations. It would appear that these college administrators view councils as an over-powered anachronism in college administration/management. The 44 colleges which viewed councils as having "too little" power showed little commonality in their perception of council usefulness (mean = 4.34; std dev = 2.28), nor in their perception of council influence (mean = 4.47; std dev = 1.43). In the case of council influence, fourteen colleges indicated that the council already exercised either "complete" or "substantial" influence over college operations, but, somewhat contradictorily, also believed that councils required more power to adequately fulfil their role.

5.11 What difference would it make if councils disappeared?

Finally, colleges were asked what real difference would it make to the adequacy with which they met community needs if councils ceased to exist. The results are listed in Table 5.8.

The responses reveal a great variation in college perceptions. Although the mean, 4.03, points to an "average" belief that the demise of councils would lead to "some difference", the standard deviation, 2.11, indicates the extreme variation in responses that gave rise to this "average". Analysis of the data by states confirms this wide variation. Among the five states for which data were identified there is a three interval (of seven) difference from highest to lowest mean by state.

Nevertheless, there are significant differences (at alpha <.05) between the states with the Victorian mean substantially less than those of the other states.

Some of the additional comments received shed a further perspective on the college ratings. One college which indicated that absence of a council would make "no real difference" nevertheless added

> ... but the credibility and accountability would be seriously diminished. (NSW)

Similar comments re accountability and credibility were made by a number of colleges, in sufficient numbers to suggest that many college administrators may see this as an adequate reason for the existence of councils.

In a different vein, another college administrator (rating = little difference) commented that

> ... other community inputs exist. (SA)

but other colleges clearly saw councils as redundant for various reasons, whether because

> ... no initiatives outside those generated by the central organization are effectively permitted. (NSW)

or,

> [councils were] established for the wrong reasons ... mainly as a tool to control colleges and principals. (WA)

and,

> ... they do not function well ... they absorb management time with meetings and reports ... (WA)

5.12 Item correlations

All council functions and processes were tested for correlation between items. The results are listed in Table 5.9. Concentrating only on correlations between functions and processes or processes and processes (that is, of items 1 to 18 with items 19 to 28, or within items 19 to 28), there are a number of correlations of particular interest.

The extent to which council operates as a sounding board against which college administrators test their ideas and directions correlates strongly with the perceived competency of councils across a large number of functions. In particular, perceived competencies in capital works, equipment decisions, staffing, planning, finance and as a community watchdog all correlate highly with the degree to which council is used as a sounding board. Not unexpectedly, in view of the above, there is an almost precise inverse correlation of the same competencies with the use of council as a rubber stamp for decisions already made by college administrators.

The extent to which council is representative of the local community is very highly correlated with the perceived competency of council on every function included in this study. Every correlation of representativeness with competency is significant at .001 and with the exception of "goal definition", they are the highest correlations obtained for functions with processes or structures. The data strongly suggest that the more representative a council is, the more likely it is to be perceived as competent across all functions. Representativeness also correlates highly with council involvement in curriculum (With the exception of "goal definition", it is the only process or structural factor which does.), lobbying, public relations and the community watchdog role. It also has a particularly high correlation with the extent to which councils are seen to have well defined goals.

The extent to which councils have well-defined goals correlates more highly than any other process or structure with council involvement and competency with the entire range of functions included in this study. Similarly, it correlates highly with most process and structure variables, in particular with the source of council activity; the role as a sounding board; the representativeness of the local community; and with local community orientation. There is a strong negative correlation with the council role as a rubber stamp.

The degree to which councils exhibit an orientation towards local community enhancement correlates reasonably highly with involvement in lobbying and public relations, and in the extent to which the council acts as a community watchdog. In the other council processes, its highest correlation is with degree of goal definition.

The role of the college chairperson has only one, relatively minor correlation, with the degree to which council acts as a rubber stamp. The direction of the correlation would suggest that the chairperson is an important consideration in either allowing or preventing this situation.

College administrators rated the composition of membership as

Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	1.00	.61	.68	.38	.56	.33	.37	.22	.59	.30	.37	.15	.19	-.06	.42	.31	.70	.44	.13	.16	-.05	.21	.35	.19	-.05	.11	.16	.08	-.02	.26	.31
2	.61	1.00	.56	.63	.49	.52	.44	.43	.60	.52	.39	.43	.38	.35	.50	.53	.67	.69	.32	.38	-.37	.47	.56	.20	.03	.23	.35	-.07	-.14	.31	.22
3	.68	.56	1.00	.60	.45	.33	.45	.25	.52	.26	.38	.27	.27	.12	.46	.38	.67	.46	.11	.34	-.13	.28	.32	.11	.05	.18	.18	.15	-.08	.21	.21
4	.38	.63	.60	1.00	.47	.62	.46	.56	.53	.56	.38	.43	.38	.36	.38	.51	.52	.69	.29	.48	-.33	.49	.51	.03	-.12	.27	.19	-.15	-.19	.19	.22
5	.56	.49	.45	.47	1.00	.70	.57	.40	.60	.47	.44	.37	.31	.21	.53	.49	.68	.57	.00	.26	-.18	.30	.48	.13	-.19	.18	.22	-.01	-.07	.24	.22
6	.33	.52	.33	.62	.70	1.00	.54	.67	.48	.65	.39	.47	.24	.25	.35	.61	.54	.80	.14	.36	-.40	.52	.51	.09	-.11	.26	.19	-.09	-.21	.21	.17
7	.37	.44	.45	.46	.57	.54	1.00	.65	.54	.47	.40	.36	.30	.17	.43	.44	.53	.54	.15	.35	-.24	.33	.42	.18	.02	.20	.12	.05	-.14	.38	.38
8	.22	.43	.25	.56	.40	.67	.65	1.00	.43	.59	.35	.40	.26	.25	.28	.42	.40	.64	.25	.29	-.32	.39	.42	-.02	-.07	.17	.19	-.13	-.27	.31	.26
9	.59	.60	.52	.53	.60	.48	.54	.43	1.00	.69	.51	.40	.41	.24	.63	.49	.71	.59	.32	.29	-.21	.38	.48	.12	-.10	.33	.23	-.02	-.32	.23	.31
10	.30	.52	.26	.56	.47	.65	.47	.59	.69	1.00	.44	.53	.35	.41	.44	.63	.44	.71	.37	.35	-.35	.46	.51	.10	-.07	.40	.29	-.11	-.29	.18	.15
11	.37	.39	.38	.38	.44	.39	.40	.35	.51	.44	1.00	.62	.58	.38	.46	.41	.44	.42	.19	.34	-.25	.26	.47	.37	.02	.27	.14	.07	-.17	.42	.37
12	.15	.43	.27	.43	.37	.47	.36	.40	.40	.53	.62	1.00	.56	.71	.38	.61	.42	.51	.30	.30	-.39	.44	.53	.27	-.08	.26	.26	.02	-.24	.30	.29
13	.19	.38	.27	.38	.31	.24	.30	.26	.41	.35	.58	.56	1.00	.72	.52	.47	.39	.34	.34	.31	-.28	.35	.55	.35	-.11	.15	.30	.02	-.19	.19	.29
14	-.06	.35	.12	.36	.21	.25	.17	.25	.24	.41	.38	.71	.72	1.00	.32	.54	.18	.29	.32	.21	-.24	.36	.46	.24	-.03	.19	.30	.00	-.11	.14	.19
15	.42	.50	.46	.38	.53	.35	.42	.28	.63	.44	.46	.38	.52	.32	1.00	.68	.67	.50	.18	.46	-.20	.38	.47	.39	-.09	.17	.22	.17	-.15	.21	.22
16	.31	.53	.38	.51	.49	.61	.44	.42	.49	.63	.41	.61	.47	.54	.68	1.00	.55	.68	.24	.54	-.30	.50	.56	.25	-.02	.21	.21	.02	-.05	.05	.05
17	.70	.67	.67	.52	.68	.54	.53	.40	.71	.44	.44	.42	.39	.18	.67	.55	1.00	.70	.21	.30	-.27	.40	.48	.21	-.10	.09	.27	.02	-.10	.40	.38
18	.44	.69	.46	.69	.57	.80	.53	.64	.59	.71	.42	.51	.34	.29	.50	.68	.70	1.00	.29	.44	-.47	.53	.57	.15	-.08	.22	.26	-.08	-.14	.24	.25
19	.13	.32	.11	.29	.00	.14	.15	.25	.32	.37	.19	.30	.34	.32	.18	.24	.21	.29	1.00	.15	-.27	.34	.36	.19	.16	.12	.24	-.19	.08	.07	.09
20	.16	.38	.34	.48	.26	.36	.35	.29	.29	.35	.34	.30	.31	.21	.46	.54	.30	.44	.15	1.00	-.26	.13	.41	.26	-.07	.24	.10	.07	-.24	.08	.16
21	-.05	-.37	-.13	-.33	-.18	-.40	-.24	-.32	-.21	-.35	-.25	-.39	-.28	-.24	-.20	-.30	-.27	-.47	-.27	-.26	1.00	-.30	-.30	.02	.27	-.16	-.16	.29	.23	-.23	-.10
22	.21	.47	.28	.49	.30	.42	.33	.39	.38	.46	.26	.44	.35	.36	.38	.50	.40	.53	.34	.23	-.30	1.00	.54	.26	-.02	.19	.23	.02	-.05	.27	.20
23	.35	.56	.32	.51	.48	.51	.42	.42	.48	.51	.47	.53	.55	.46	.47	.56	.48	.57	.36	.41	-.30	.54	1.00	.35	.01	.25	.32	.02	-.23	.31	.32
24	.19	.20	.11	.03	.13	.09	.18	-.02	.12	.10	.37	.27	.35	.24	.39	.25	.21	.15	.19	.26	.02	.26	.35	1.00	.16	.10	.14	.10	.01	.09	.29
25	-.05	.03	.05	-.12	-.19	-.11	.02	-.07	-.10	-.07	.02	-.08	-.11	-.03	-.09	-.02	-.10	-.08	.16	-.07	.27	-.02	.01	.16	1.00	-.04	.02	.16	.16	-.06	-.08
26	.11	.23	.18	.27	.18	.26	.20	.17	.33	.40	.27	.26	.15	.19	.17	.21	.09	.22	.12	.24	-.16	.19	.25	.10	-.04	1.00	.18	.11	-.06	.19	.21
27	.16	.35	.18	.19	.22	.19	.12	.19	.23	.29	.14	.26	.30	.30	.22	.21	.27	.26	.24	.10	-.16	.23	.32	.14	.02	.18	1.00	-.12	.08	.30	.16
28	.08	.07	.15	-.15	-.01	-.09	-.05	-.13	-.02	-.11	.07	.02	.02	.00	.17	.02	.02	-.08	-.19	.07	.29	.02	.02	.10	.16	.11	-.12	1.00	.20	.09	.07
29	-.02	-.14	-.08	-.19	-.07	-.21	-.14	-.27	-.32	-.29	-.17	-.24	-.19	-.11	-.15	-.05	-.10	-.14	.08	-.24	.23	-.05	-.23	.01	.16	-.06	.08	.20	1.00	-.18	-.19
30	.26	.31	.21	.19	.24	.21	.38	.31	.23	.18	.42	.30	.19	.14	.21	.05	.40	.24	.07	.08	-.23	.27	.31	.09	-.06	.19	.30	.09	-.18	1.00	.66
31	.31	.22	.21	.22	.22	.17	.38	.26	.31	.15	.37	.29	.29	.19	.22	.05	.38	.25	.09	.16	-.10	.20	.32	.29	-.08	.21	.16	.07	-.19	.66	1.00

Table 5.9 Correlation co-efficients, all council processes and functions. Pearson r, one tail significance: r > .28, significant at .001; .22< r < .29, significant at .01. N = 113.

Variable labels

1	Involvement in capital works	17	Community watchdog role
2	Competence in capital works	18	Community watchdog competence
3	Involvement in equip. choice	19	Origin of council activity
4	Competence in equip.choice	20	Council as a sounding board
5	Involvement in staffing	21	Council as a rubber stamp
6	Competence in staffing	22	Representativeness of council
7	Involvement in finance	23	Degree of goal definition
8	Competence in finance	24	Local community orientation
9	Involvement in curriculum	25	Influence of chairperson
10	Competence in curriculum	26	Membership composition
11	Involvement in planning	27	Influence of council size
12	Competence in planning	28	Influence of principal
13	Involvement in lobbying	29	Influence of TAFE culture
14	Competence at lobbying	30	Orientation provision
15	Public relations role	31	Staff development
16	Competence in pub. relations		

the most important single influence on council activity (Table 5.6), considerably more so than any other influence. However, it does not correlate highly with any factors other than involvement and competence in planning. There are more modest correlations with competencies in most other functions.

The influence of the size of the council correlates with a number of factors and processes, but the wording of the item makes it impossible to determine whether it is larger or smaller councils which are seen to correlate with these variables. The data was re-analyzed on the basis of council size. The results, not recorded in detail here, indicated that the larger sized councils were generally those responsible for the higher correlations; however, this possible relationship would need to be examined by more explicit and better designed items in order to draw conclusions.

A further process, the influence of the principal, correlated significantly with only one other variable, the extent to which council was seen to act as a rubber stamp.

Finally, three items relating to the difficulties of adjusting to TAFE's language and culture and the provision of orientation and staff development programs for council members were tested for correlation with all other items. Although adjustment to TAFE's culture was negatively correlated with almost every other item, the relationship is generally not significant. The provision of orientation and staff development programs, however, is correlated significantly with both the involvement and competency of councils across a number of functions, specifically with equipment, finance, planning and the community watchdog role.

All of the variables were tested for correlation with the items "what real difference would it make if the council ceased to exist" and "council influence on college operations". The results are listed in Table 5.10.

Correlation does not necessarily relate to causation; nevertheless it is clear from almost every pair of items tested that colleges which believe that the disappearance of council would make a real difference rated both functional and process variables highly, while conversely, those which believe that the disappearance of the council would make little real difference rated both functional and process variables lowly.

	Correlation with Council			
Potential functions	influence		disappearance	
	r	signif.	r	signif.
Capital works decision involvement	.401	.001	.383	.001
Capital works decision competency	.548	.001	.603	.001
Equipment purchase involvement	.417	.001	.351	.001
Equipment purchase competency	.466	.001	.581	.001
Staffing decision involvement	.417	.001	.443	.001
Staffing decision competency	.420	.001	.534	.001
Finance decision involvement	.593	.001	.538	.001
Finance decision competency	.517	.001	.602	.001
Curriculum decision involvement	.464	.001	.331	.001
Curriculum decision competency	.294	.001	.386	.001
College planning involvement	.515	.001	.501	.001
College planning competency	.411	.001	.520	.001
Involvement in lobbying	.444	.001	.390	.001
Competency at lobbying	.426	.001	.511	.001
Involvement in public relations	.448	.001	.527	.001
Competency at public relations	.282	.01	.453	.001
Community watchdog role	.538	.001	.552	.001
Community watchdog competency	.482	.001	.603	.001
Potential processes				
Origin of council activity	.283	.01	.376	.001
Council as a sounding board	.395	.001	.337	.001
Council as a rubber stamp	-.336	.001	-.476	.001
Council's representativeness	.407	.001	.471	.001
Council's goal definition	.505	.001	.635	.001
Council's local orientiation	.287	.01	.305	.001
Role of Council chairperson	.006		-.041	
Council membership composition	.240	.01	.094	
Council size	.321	.001	.216	
Frequency of council meetings	.208		.311	.001
Principal's influence on council	-.050		-.155	
Council influence on college			.559	.001
Real diff. if council disappears	.559	.001		

Table 5.10 Correlation, influence of council on college operations and real difference if council disappears, with potential functions and potential processes. Pearson r, one tail significance.

There are some exceptions to this generalization. Among the process variables - the chairman, composition of membership, size, and principal's influence showed no significant level of correlation with either the council's influence on the college nor with the college's perception of the effects of council disappearing. There was also one significant negative correlation, that concerning the degree to which council acts as a rubber stamp.

There appears to be a distinct association between council's involvement and perceived competency in the listed functions and its influence and usefulness. Similarly, there appears to be a distinct association between a number of council processes and its influence and usefulness.

5.13 Advisory role of councils

Comments volunteered in response to item 49 addressed a number of functions and processes not covered in the formal items. These included the advisory nature of many councils, procedural matters concerning membership, sub-committees, the over-involvement of council members, links to the community, and council secretariat support.

Comments concerning the advisory role were somewhat divided. A number of comments were along the lines of,

> ... effectiveness of input ... is made more difficult to achieve because of the advisory role. (NSW)

or,

> ... while ever these [councils] have an advisory tag attached to them they will never realise their full potential (NSW)

or, as seen from the other side of the same coin,

> ... councils should be corporate bodies responsible for the management and control of the college. (Vic)

and,

> ... to be effective and able to attract the right type of membership they must have real power in the general role of a Board of Directors.

Not all principals, however, saw councils so positively. Their position was perhaps best summarized by the attitude

> [there is] a danger in allowing the council to have more than an advisory role. Once the community's needs and views are raised it should be left to the educationalists to find the means to satisfy them within the framework of Government policy, college policy and funds provided. (Q)

5.14 Selection of council members

The largest number of written comments concerned council membership, and of these almost half made reference to the procedures of member selection. All references were, directly or by inference, critical of existing procedures, although it must be remembered that these represent only a relatively small proportion of all responses received. Among the issues raised were,

> ... reluctance to change membership to any significant degree to bring in new talent ... (NSW)
>
> ... political appointments to the councils are often little more than 'pork barrelling'. (NSW)
>
> ... rolling membership rather than all on a fixed term terminating at the same date. (NSW)
>
> ... handling of resignations at local level without Ministerial involvement to expedite procedures. (NSW)
>
> ... current system ... where the Minister sanctions nomination has proved to be slow. (NSW)
>
> ... requirement that all ... retire or renominate at the same time can mean little or no continuity. (NSW)

and,

> ... essential that at least 60% of council membership is from outside i.e. not staff and students. (Vic)

5.15 Over-committed council members

Other aspects of membership were addressed in some comments. A number of colleges commented on the fact that many council members were over-committed, and although colleges may be tempted to seek the "best" members, as per,

> ... composition to be broad and as many good quality people as possible. (Vic)

nevertheless the reality is often

> Those members who have the capability to be effective and efficient are too busy. Chairperson of the college council is an executive officer of no less than seven other committees or councils in town and gives scant attention to vital issues because that is all the time that is available.

and

> ... I cannot make too many demands on their time. (SA)

5.16 Links to the local community

The links provided by the council to the local community were the subject of many positive comments and it is evident that such links are regarded as a major function of councils. Most comments were of the nature

> ... they provide a very good interface between the college and its community. (NSW)

However, other principals singled out the personal assistance given to them in their role, including

> ... they always help me informally ... (NSW)

and

> ... a role to play in advising a principal new to the position. (NSW)

while others emphasised the accountability function

> It ... provides accountability to both the community it serves and the Minister. (NSW)

One college emphasised the assistance to college responsiveness brought about by councils

> ... liaison leads to immediate feedback on college performance ... (Q)

another their potential value in a lobbying role

> ... they are difficult to gag by the Minister.

5.17 Other factors and processes

A range of other factors and processes were also suggested as influencing the performance of councils. Foremost among these were endorsements of the committee structure, perhaps most succinctly stated as

> the secret of a good council ... a good committee structure.

or, more wistfully, as

> I would like to have sub-committees.

Endorsement of the committee/sub-committee structure primarily came from Victoria where structures of this type are formalised, but also from the other states.

Another "secret of a good council" is

> ... well prepared agendas and papers for council..

a process supported by another college as

> ... a strong level of support ... which enables the college council ... to receive advice and support over a range of issues ... therefore able to make well informed decisions on matters that are brought to its attention". (Vic)

and by another as

> their effectiveness is directly and strongly related to the quality of service provided by the principal. (NSW)

With respect to the role of the principal, another college observed

> attitudinal problems and a lack of skill of many principals in valuing the role of the council and in managing their input and participation [leads to rejection of the role of councils]. (NSW)

Other process suggestions included council involvement in social activity and the appointment of members through official notification in the "Government Gazette" in order to add "visibility and prestige to appointments".

6. INTERVIEWS WITH MEMBERS OF COLLEGE COUNCILS

6.1 Background

Interviews were conducted in three states with members of seven college councils which were believed to be "successful". A sample of seven, from a population of over two hundred colleges, is an extremely small number from which to attempt to generalise, particularly when one considers that colleges operate in what are essentially eight distinctive environments (six states and two territories). Further, it was the experience of this research that in spite of commonalities of environment, each council was unique, a product of its environment, of its membership, and of the college membership, particularly the college administration. Nevertheless certain attributes, processes and behaviours were identified sufficiently often so that trends emerged.

6.2 Council functions: lobbying

Of the nine functions which were included in the questionnaire distributed to college principals, lobbying and public relations evoked the greatest comment from councillors.

The comments received suggest that many councillors see lobbying (although they dislike the term) as their most successful, and perhaps their most important, function. Certainly it constitutes an important and successful ingredient in the activities of the councils included in this study.

Not untypical was one view,

> I believe it was through the efforts of the council who approached the Minister and finally our pleas were answered. (Council Chairperson, NSW)

The comment,

> ... cynical use of the fact that its a swinging seat to gain every advantage ... (Council President, Victoria)

was expressed as being particularly relevant in two colleges and its absence was bemoaned in two more. In a generic sense, the conclusion

> [that's] the advantage of having the patrician class on your council. Even Labor governments are susceptable to patricians. (Council President, Victoria)

appeared to apply equally well to the attitudes of a majority of those interviewed, but certainly not to all, while the simple assertion

> They have avenues to the Minister that I don't have. (Principal, Victoria)

succinctly captured the reality of the situation for most principals.

Those interviewed were asked what they believed was the most important reason for the apparent success of their council. Most attributed success to the composition of the membership, but an important theme in these answers was in a similar vein to

> I think because they have the political clout ... to contact politicians and get their story across. (Elected staff rep, WA).

Although some lobbying appeared to be unsubtle

> [Lobbying] is a major function. You need to be able to lobby with the local members of parliament, you need that person who is going to be able to lobby our Federal member, who happens to be the Treasurer, or you need that person who knows a contact to talk to someone else such as the Director of... (Community rep, NSW)

Many of those interviewed however, were at pains to point out the discretion with which lobbying was employed.

> [Council] make quite a point of saying we don't ask for anything unless we need it and this way we build up the trust of the politicians and therefore they will be more ready to come and support us ... they want to be seen as a very responsible council and they won't jump in feet first unless they've got lots and lots of facts and things to back them up. (Elected staff rep, WA)

6.3 Council functions: public relations

The majority view of those interviewed was that "TAFE has not been well understood". In one college the view was substantiated by factual comment,

> I was a member of the group that carried out the evaluation of the college. Fifty per cent (of the local community) didn't know where the college was. (Elected staff member, Victoria)

But generally the view was based on belief or perception, such as

> Industry is largely unaware of what the college can offer. (Community rep, NSW)

or

> Much of the community is suspicious of TAFE. They need to be re-assured. (Elected staff member, Victoria)

Although overall this was the majority view, in isolated instances there were perceptions that public relations were both very important and "very well done". In one council in particular every person interviewed commented to the effect that "the college is well understood" and that it constituted "a community focus" (Victoria).

Among those who believed that TAFE had image problems there was an almost precise division between those who believed it was the council's responsibility and those who believed the responsibility sat squarely with the college staff. "Council not involved", "college staff, not council", "ultimately a staff role" and "college internal matter" are representative of comments made in all states. Conversely, so also were observations such as "council responsibility", "an acknowledgement that we must promote", "we have to be a PR group" and "council has a real role" common to all states.

Among those who acknowledged council responsibility a number commented negatively, including

> ... we attempt, but its not one of our stronger points. (Community rep, WA)

and

> We market ourselves better to our student body than to industry. (Community rep, NSW)

Another saw potential problems for his college if publicity was too successful.

> ... one of the dilemmas. The more you do for TAFE, the better you tell the public what's available, the more people are going to be interested in it ... you create an interest and then you get to a stage where you can't supply the demand. (Council Chairperson, NSW)

There were, however, a number of positive highlights, exemplified by

> ... we realised that our image was bad ... so we decided as a council one of our first objectives would be to promote and sell the facilities to the public. We invited them here in groups ... we showed them around the college, gave them cheese and bickies, put on lectures for them and actually got them to commit themselves and tell us what

> they wanted us to do .. the response was fantastic.
> (Council Chairperson, WA)

The ultimate intention of one councillor (who saw the council failing in this aspect at present) succinctly summarised what many TAFE system administrators would hope for

> Council is keen to project the image to the community that we are a class act. In the longer term it will come through the quality of the graduates. (Community rep, Victoria)

6.4 Council functions: staffing

Most councils in this study had some involvement in staffing. Almost all exercised a significant role in the selection of the college principal, a number played a significant role in the selection of other senior college staff, and representatives from most councils were included on the selection panels for other college staff.

A number of those interviewed emphasised the importance of the relationship between council and senior college staff and therefore the need for council to be completely involved in their selection. In the words of one interviewee

> ... the main thing in any company is the selection of the the Chief Executive ... if you can control the Chief Executive you control the rest. (Community rep, WA)

or of another,

> ... it's essential. He's our man, the person we've delegated the day to day running of the college to ... the success ... all depends on our relationship with him ...
> (Community rep, Victoria)

Council involvement in staff selection is not always harmonious. As some councils found, existing industrial agreements and precedents may receive priority over council recommendations.

> The council has had a role in appointing senior staff ... we are not very impressed by the time it has taken. I personally spent quite a few days ... time I can't really afford in going through interview after interview after interview, making selections and in every case having them over-turned by a three man tribunal which ... had no feeling or no experience in the TAFE area. Its so bad that ... I refused to be involved ... anymore.
> (Council Chairperson, WA)

At a different level, members of one council recognised the essential importance of quality staff to the delivery of quality programs and the difficulties of attracting such staff to their relatively remote college. In an attempt to attract quality staff the council endorsed initiatives by the college administration designed to ensure that spouses had the opportunity to accompany applicants to selection interviews by providing financial assistance, that they were given a carefully guided tour of what the town and district offered, that suitable housing was available, and that it was air-conditioned at council expense.

6.5 Council functions: curriculum

Council views on curriculum were similarly divided. In one council most of those interviewed indicated that their primary concern was college governance and little else. However, from every other council at least some members endorsed a role of bringing community educational needs to the college's notice. Generally this was in the nature of "information awareness" and took place through informal direct contact between a council member and a relevant college staff member. All of these members, however, indicated that at some time, but not as a regular practice, council had been the forum where particular community needs had been discussed. The nature and outcome of these discussions varied from one council to another. In some councils members pointed to a number of specific course recommendations which the council had made and which subsequently had been implemented by the college, but generally members regarded course information brought to council's notice by individuals as primarily "awareness raising". This perspective was well stated by one member as

> The council have, I understand, the right to suggest, propose, recommend various courses and yes we do, particularly from the industry viewpoint ... in my company, which is a high tech one, you can see the way industry is moving ... the way awards are being restructured and the way that the subsequent training of tradespeople will have to go and we provide input there. I don't see this committee as being the one that dictates what shall be done. We have a group of professionals here who really are the ones whose task it is to match up community needs with what they have at their disposal to meet those needs. (Community rep, NSW)

Although there was some level of agreement among these six councils that they had a role to play in bringing syllabus-type information to the notice of the college, there was less enthusiasm as to whether this role extended to other facets of curriculum. Although there was an occasional inference that council's role may extend into areas such as the way courses are delivered or evaluated

> ... we haven't gone into that yet ... (Council Chairperson, NSW)

or the rare assertion that

> Under its constitution the council does have a brief to look at new initiatives in education, new fields of direction that TAFE itself has not yet ventured into, and I would say ... members are mindful of the fact. (Community rep, NSW).

The majority response, however, was clearly along similar lines to

> It is a college professional response, not a council responsibility (Community rep, NSW).

6.6 Councils functions: community watchdog

With few exceptions members were in agreement that the community accountability, or watchdog, function was a council responsibility.

To most, accountability appeared to be a somewhat amorphous concept, related to the

> ... conscience of the college in terms of the community (Community rep, Victoria)

or,

> ... in the best interests of the community ... (Community rep, NSW)

and,

> ... very conscious we represent the community ... (Council Chairperson, WA)

Others related accountability to college resources

> ... a genuine desire to see the dollar go as far as possible. (Community rep, WA)

or,

> ... to make certain management is doing the right thing with money, with facilities. (Community rep, Victoria)

Perhaps the best statement came from one member with a long history of involvement with councils, a statement that somehow captured the notions of appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness:

> TAFE tries too much to be all things to all people. Finance is limited ... we have to be sure that the courses ... offer the best value for money. (Council Treasurer, Victoria)

Unfortunately it is impossible to say conclusively that the somewhat more vague statements which preceded were in fact meant to convey the same understanding of role.

6.7 Council functions: other

The remaining four functions from the questionnaire, capital works, equipment, finance and planning, evoked relatively few explicit comments on perceived council role. One particular comment summarised what appeared to be the predominant council process

> ... we spend a lot of time on the concepts, but very little on the detail. (Community rep, Victoria).

There was, however, some variation state to state on particular functions.

In Victoria, councils have a specific legal role with respect to finance and this was simply taken as granted by all members interviewed from that state; however, even here the changing role was recognised by some

> [the council] don't really control the money any more. More and more it is 'tagged' by Government. (Council Treasurer, Victoria)

or,

> ... control is being increasingly centralised under this Government ... senior management follows Government policy. (Community rep, Victoria).

and

> [council has been] .. emasculated. (Council President, Victoria)

Council members from other states generally indicated they expected as a minimum requirement that the college budget be presented to them for discussion and suggestion. In three of the four non-Victorian colleges, council exercised control over a small section of finance which had been delegated to their responsibility by the college principal.

6.8 Characteristics of successful councils: goal definition

At least one person from each of the councils in which interviews were conducted perceived their council as strongly goal-motivated. Judged from the frequency of comments it is possible to conclude that in four of the seven councils it was a most powerful motivating factor and one to which the ultimate success of the council was often attributed.

Comments such as

> ... definitely a strong sense of mission. (Community rep, Victoria),
>
> ... direction is vital, (Council Chairperson, WA),
>
> ... to become a quality institute ... that's what allows us to have consensus. (Community rep, Victoria)

and

> I think that [goal direction] has been the strongest factor. (Community rep, NSW)

were recorded frequently at all four councils.

With the exception of one council, goals appear to be based on tacit understanding rather than written, but in that one council they were written and it was acknowledged that

> council must frequently evaluate and review its goals. (Community rep, Victoria)

Goal orientation impacted on council operations through two quite disimilar means. With one group, basically the younger colleges, there was a continuing sense of achievement as the college acquired one set of facilities after another. The goal orientation of these councils was generally cast in terms of bricks and mortar, of "completing" the college, and council momentum was generated both by the goal and a roll of success as immediate objectives were attained. In these councils several members indicated their belief that council enthusiasm would be much more difficult to maintain once the basic college structure was in place. Comments such as:

> ... it's much easier when the college is new ...
>
> (Community rep, Victoria)

and,

> [we are] growing quickly. If we were static much of the motivation would go. (Community rep, Victoria)

accurately reflect this feeling.

The second group were equally goal-oriented, but their orientation appeared to be cast in terms of doggedness, of achievement through attrition: the carpark/canteen/childcare centre/building resulting from years of persistence and struggle. The next goal of this group, firmly held, was generally cast in terms of an equally lengthy time frame.

Only one set of council members consistently expressed goals that appeared to be based on some total educational concept, although one member of a newer college did caution that

> bricks and mortar are not enough. (Community rep,

Victoria).

Another council, rooted in history and tradition, appeared strongly driven by the goal of resisting further encroachment on their powers by the central TAFE authority.

6.9 Characteristics of successful councils: local orientation

As might be expected, local orientation was a powerful motive in the operation of the country or rural college councils; however, it was also a most powerful factor in one metropolitan council. In other metropolitan colleges

> ... people come from all over the place so they don't identify with ______ ... no community interest ... no soul. (Council Chairperson, NSW)

In contrast, in a rural college, and in response to a question regarding the importance of local orientation one councillor replied

> Yes, and so it should be. We are so isolated, so far away, so forgotten. (Community rep, Victoria)

To another rural-based councillor, the local community was

> the most important thing in creating the feeling the college has about itself and its own identity. (Elected non-teaching staff rep, Victoria)

While to another, the council's purpose was to

> try to bring in additional services to the district. (Community rep, NSW)

One Victorian country centre was acknowledged by a number of councillors as "a parochial sort of place" where "the college is part of the fabric of ... ", and the most important and powerful stimulus was the college's " ... history and tradition ... ." (Council President, Victoria).

Somewhat surprisingly the strongest expressions of local orientation came from members of a metropolitan council located in "a battlers community" where

> ... the local community is the sole reason for the college's existence. (Community rep, Victoria)

and the college was

> ... provided for and on behalf of the local community and and in response to the local community. (Elected staff rep, Victoria)

Members of this council were probably the most representative of any council where interviews were conducted. In addition to a spread of members drawn from industry and commerce, the council included members drawn from the ethnic community, the handicapped, single parents, local government and community services. All of those interviewed - industry, commerce and other - shared the same substantial orientation to the local community.

6.10 Characteristics of successful councils: representativeness

Almost every councillor interviewed expressed an opinion on the degree to which they saw the council membership as representative of the local community. Approximately eighty per cent believed their council to be "representative, but ..."; the other twenty per cent believed their council to be "not representative, but ...". The "but ..." amounted to essentially the same thing in both cases.

Council members are generally chosen in the first instance as "representative", representative of segments of industry, commerce, community group or locality. Less often their selection appears to be purely political. However, it is clear from the interviews that although members were appointed on some basis of representation, it is rare for them to speak or vote as delegates of those groups. Some of those interviewed expressed "amazement" at the absence of delegate-like behaviour; that their concerns over the appointment of "union" members had been completely misplaced; or, at the rarity of members attempting to "big-note" themselves. Instead, councillors perceived their fellow members as bringing

> their own values and a 'college hat'. (Community rep, WA)

to council business, and the conduct of discussion and making of decisions as always on the basis of "what's best for the college." (Community rep, NSW)

Most believed that the interests of community groups not directly represented on council were taken care of, partly through the trustee-like behaviour of existing members, partly through the multiple experiences of existing members (most councillors interviewed could have been representative of a number of community groups), and partly through the presence of other non-council advisory groups to the college.

Certainly many community groups were not directly represented. Of the seven councils in which interviews were conducted, only one included a direct representative of the local migrant community; across the seven councils, aborigines and the handicapped were directly represented by just two members; three of the councils each had a single female member.

The lack of direct representation was frequently condoned, sometimes on the grounds listed above, but sometimes as

> [members of the Council are] more concerned with governance than representativeness. (Council President, Victoria)

or,

> ... anxious that if they involve a cross-section of the community they will miss out on the expertise (Principal, Victoria)

and

> Council doesn't need single issue representatives. (Community rep, Victoria)

In other cases members referred to the difficulties experienced in finding suitable representatives. In one college, located in a region with a very large ethnic community,

> since the resignation of _____ we have been unable to find a suitable representative of the ethnic community. (Council Chairperson, NSW)

Elsewhere, members from two councils reported difficulty in locating student representatives who would actively participate, even though in one

> student representation has been nurtured. (Community rep, Victoria)

Although it will be referred to later (see 6.15) it should also be recorded here that the elected staff representatives of three councils believed that their role on Council had been reduced to tokenism.

To the extent that the trustee-like behaviour attributed to council members is an acceptable proxy for direct representation, the observation that

> the transition from delegate to trustee is made during the 'learning' period. (Council President, Victoria)

may be of some significance in promoting more effective councils.

6.11 Characteristics of successful councils: membership

The single factor cited most frequently for the success of each council was the composition and mix of the individual members. To a little over one third of those interviewed the type of member most sought after was

> ... prominent business people with a proven track record. (Community rep, Victoria)

or,

> ... high profile ... influential in the community. (Elected staff rep, WA)

although an almost similar sized group suggested that successful businessmen were sometimes not the best because they are

> ... too busy to consider items. It's one of our biggest problems. (Council Chairperson, NSW)

and that success comes simply from any members who are

> keen, enthusiastic, fired-up members. (Community rep, Victoria)

or,

> ... committed ... the college at heart ... realise that they are here to do a job. (Non-teaching staff rep, WA)

Sentiments of "committed" and "college at heart" were frequently expressed by members about other members and several emphasised the importance of "careful selection".

Not all councils have the right to select or advise on their membership. Where they do, a number of members perceived risks of "in-breeding". There was a

> ... very cliquey selection of members ... it helps to have gone to Geelong Grammar. (Community rep, Victoria)

or,

> ... a perception that people already on the council brought their mates onto it. (Elected staff rep, Victoria)

and,

> My position is an absolute accident of circumstances. I would never have been selected ... if it had not been for that combination of events and circumstances. (Council President, Victoria)

Although such remarks were heard occasionally, the majority comment clearly expressed the belief that where councils were empowered to make recommendations on membership it was done carefully and always in the very best interests of the college.

Of equal concern is the potential for those councils where membership is determined outside the council to be "swamped" by unsuitable members. Although one principal interviewed spoke at some length on such experiences when principal in another TAFE system, in none of those councils where interviews were held was this stated as a problem. Rather,

> ... when this committee was initially formed, in rolled all these political people ... who suddenly found they weren't impacting ... they were simply trying to make a mark for themselves through the college ... and when they found they weren't making a name quickly enough for themselves ... they quickly dropped out. (Community rep, NSW)

and indeed, where political appointments have entered and remained as workers in councils it can be viewed as an advantage.

> The newly elected member for _____ , which covers about half the area this college serves was a member of council until his election ... we look upon him as our college member. (Principal, NSW)

A more important concern was the frequently expressed need for a reasonable turnover of members at all levels in councils. In one council it was estimated

> Something less than twenty per cent have been members for five years or less. (Council President, Victoria)

while it was suggested that two councils harboured small "in" groups of long serving members. The existence of these in-groups produced a dichotomy of reactions. Whereas on one hand

> I was quite staggered at the beginning of the year. My first meeting that I went to ... apparently it had already been decided who was going to be Chairperson and the Deputy Chairman just sort of walked in and said, "Well _____'s decided to be Chairman this year .." ... and that was it. Sometimes I just get the feeling that decisions have been talked over and made before. (Elected staff rep, WA)

or,

> ... in-group has inhibited new members remaining. (Elected staff rep, Victoria)

and

> ... no doubt that many councillors are intimidated by a small central group ... frightened to ask questions ... made to look stupid. (Community rep, Victoria)

In the same two councils it was also held

> It's the small group of really dedicated people that really makes it good. They have been around a long time and know all the right questions to ask. (Community rep, Victoria)

and

> ... a lot of that credit [for council success] is due to the fact that we do have these councillors." (College principal, WA).

For their part, members of the so-called in-groups variously suggested

> If you look at the Minutes, most of them never say a word ... 'knife and forkers' I call them ... just come for the dinner ... the best committee is a committee of one and there is no doubt about that. (Community rep, WA)

or,

> There is no in-group. Everyone has the right to vote. (Community rep, Victoria)

although one commented,

> ... perhaps they do feel intimidated ... [but] individual members should realise the opportunities they have to make a contribution. (Community rep, Victoria)

The difficulty of finding suitable members was suggested:

> The reality is that there are very few [such people] willing. (Council President, Victoria)

But comments made by some of those interviewed suggest that there may be some areas where appropriate members may be found that have not yet been tapped. Four of those interviewed were senior executives in large national or multinational firms. Each stated that it was policy in their firm to encourage participation in community organizations by senior executives, or as stated by one

> ... it's a clearly spelt out expectation of all the executives once you reach my level." (Community member, Victoria)

Every major city in Australia hosts large national and multinational firms.

Good members can also come from unexpected sources. One member, described by a number of her fellow councillors as "excellent", stated

> I never expected to become a member because I had often been a strong critic of what the college was doing ... but I was approached by ____ and asked would I agree to being nominated ... (Community rep, Victoria)

Another, described by fellow councillors as "exceedingly astute", added

> I found out about it by accident ... it certainly wasn't advertised too well. (Community rep, WA)

While not advocating that councils seek to take on every critic as nominees for membership, clearly it is an avenue which may be explored. Similarly, there would appear to be opportunity to more effectively advertise and canvass interest among potential nominees.

6.12 Characteristics of successful councils: TAFE "culture"

Councillors interviewed were invited to comment on the difficulties posed by TAFE's unique culture - the limits of control, language, acronyms, customs and traditions. The replies ranged from

> No problem. It doesn't require an in-depth knowledge of TAFE. (Community rep, Victoria)

through

> They rattle off letters which mean something to them, and yes, it does need explanation, but it hasn't proved a problem. We simply say "Well, what do you mean by ABC?" and then we know what they're talking about. TAFE people talk in their own language the same as mining people talk in their language. They know what they're talking about and if we don't understand we only have to ask. (Council Chairperson, NSW)

to

> They are like spectators at a tennis match, heads turning, watching the discussion move from end to end. They are not familiar with the terminology, the bureaucracy, the limitations on what can or can't be done.
> (Elected staff rep, NSW)

The latter response was, in essence, the most widely shared. Estimates of the time required to become sufficiently knowledgeable to be able to contribute meaningfully varied from a year to more than two years.

In one council the problems were partially solved by,

> Every time someone uses an acronym I say 'Hey! Let's just keep it in plain English'. (College principal, Victoria)

and most councils provided some level of induction or orientation, but none had developed a systematic and effective approach to the problem.

From the information provided by college councillors, induction or orientation programs ranged from a guided tour of college facilities, through a listing of the commonly used terms in council, to a statement of the philosophy of the college. Beyond induction/orientation, a number of individual members from two councils had also attended formal development programs designed to improve their skills as council members and most members of one other council had attended a weekend residential, together with college staff, which was described as

> ... a massive learning exercise. (Community rep, Victoria)

While some of those interviewed indicated a desire and willingness to attend development programs and others a desire for a thorough induction, of the type where new members would be

> ... made aware of the management procedure of the Council, intimately aware of the management procedure of the college, the limits of the principals, the limits of our registrar who is our financial controller, the staff control of the two deputy principals and the function of the senior head teachers ... [made] fully aware of what's going on in their college and how it occurs. (Community rep, NSW)

the great majority believed that assistance at either one of these two levels would greatly assist their ability to more rapidly participate fully in Council.

6.13 Characteristics of successful councils: other

Although the preceding functions and processes attracted the most comment, a number of other isues were frequently raised by those interviewed.

One of these was the role of the Chairperson. In three of the seven councils it was consistently suggested as a major ingredient of success,

> In a good council ... you have got to have a Chairman who is alert enough not to totally direct,but to bring out the best of the members ... (Community rep, WA)

or,

> We have a superb Chairman ... always well prepared ... keeps the agenda on track ... excellent discussions ... no sidetracks. (Elected staff rep, Victoria)

are representative of the level of comment.

The principals interviewed also indicated their appreciation of the role of the Chairperson. Six of the seven made strong positive comments on the drive, energy and commitment of their Chairperson, including

> ... fortunate in having the services of a very dedicated Chairman and Deputy Chairman both of whom have been totally supportive ... (College principal, WA)

> ... I have no hesitation in ringing the Chairman ... to keep him informed ... to bounce an idea off ... totally committed ... (College principal, NSW)

and

> ... he's on the campus two three times a week ... totally involved in what's happening ... no interference ..
> (College principal, Victoria)

In the seventh college the principal praised the past efforts of the Chairperson, but was now of the opinion that the Chairperson "would admit himself that he's been there too long." Equally illuminating is the fact that every council chairperson, without exception, made strong positive comments about the college principal. This relationship will be taken up in a subsequent section.

The importance of a good sub-committee system was often cited as integral to a good council. It was evident in this study that all councils used their sub-committees as the venue where issues were thrashed out before recommendations were sent on to the full council. Variously, sub-committees were

> The place for members to express their views. (Community rep, Victoria)

and

> At the committee level things are very much thrashed out, right down to the nitty gritty. (Council President, Victoria)

Sub-committees have a much wider membership, and to that extent are more representative, than the full council.

The need for a good council secretariat was also raised. Many of those interviewed emphasised the need for properly structured agendas; the early distribution of printed materials; indications of the nature of agenda items; and the prompt distribution of minutes. Several members of one council remarked on recent beneficial changes arising from a restructred secretariat. More ominously, two members of another council made similar comments, to the effect that

> ... lack of a good secretariat has reinforced the position of a small in-group.

The final "other" issue which attracted a number of comments was the social side of council membership. Those who chose to comment generally believed that a social atmosphere, whether a provided meal (at four councils) or light refreshments, was conducive to better understanding of both each other and of issues. One member, about to retire from council activities, advised

> this is important because it's quite often after the meeting that the real business gets started ... the social side should be kept up very much and encouraged. (Community rep, NSW)

6.14 Relationship between council and college

The respective roles of council and college are critical, both to the perceived success of the concept of council and to the success of the college.

Although perceptions of councils varied from

> We are a governing council. We must govern. (Community rep, Victoria)

to

> I am the principal. The decision is finally mine. (College principal, NSW)

Nevertheless there was broad consensus on how college and council might best relate to each other. Almost without exception those interviewed emphasised some notion of partnership, of the college administration and council integrating and mutually supporting each other. This was expressed by one interviewee as

> ... the dynamics of [senior college administration] staff and Council integration is vital. In this college the level of integration is extremely good. (Community rep, Victoria)

The mutual respect of council and principal for each other has been previously referred to (6.13), but who actually runs what? At face value the relationship appears relatively straightforward. In the words of one interviewee

> Council makes the policy, the Director manages. (Community rep, Victoria)

or of another,

> Council has delegated its responsibility for management of the college to the Director. (Council President, Victoria)

But there is a question as to the extent of the role played by each.

One view expressed was that all initiatives of any consequence originate from the government and that therefore both council and college administration are reduced to no more than a reactive role. While there is undoubtably an element of truth in this, the level of activity at the colleges in this study indicates nevertheless that there is considerable scope for initiatives from elsewhere.

No council claimed to control its college, in fact the opposite was stated by one member,

> If council thinks it can drive the college to do certain things then it is sadly mistaken. They are the profess-

> ional educators. (Community rep, Victoria)

Others believed that council was in no position to exercise control, including

> They [the council] are unaware of what is going on and they sit in there and re-arrange their chairs on the Titanic ... I don't think they have a clue what is going on ... (Elected staff rep, NSW)

or

> [council] only think they know where they are going. (Elected non-teaching staff rep, Victoria)

and that the outcome was effective control of the council by the college administration,

> Sub-committee structure gives college administration great influence. Council is really run by college administration. (Elected staff rep, Victoria)

> Most of the issues are decided by college management and they take them along to Council for endorsement .. there are very few issues that come up before Council that have not been pre-determined by the college management committee. (Elected staff rep, Victoria)

and,

> ... it is so complex ... it is absolutely beyond them to keep up with everything ... college administration runs the show. (Elected staff rep, NSW)

It is significant that all of the above comments were made by college staff members. Similar, if somewhat more subdued, comments were made by elected staff representatives at all but one of the colleges included in the study.

The potential for college administration to dictate to council was acknowledged from sources other than these. One principal stated in part (without precluding council's right to initiate actions of its own)

> Council is asked to endorse my decisions. (College Director, Victoria)

and a Council President expressed the belief

> Council can be used by a Director to take up a certain position ... system could go horribly wrong ... Previously I would have had a cynical view that councils were rubber stamps and that Directors ran everything .. that is how many Councils are perceived ... it certainly isn't true here. (Council President, Victoria)

In all councils the principal is the executive officer and

> ... the only things that get onto the agenda, or at least how they are presented, is entirely under his control ... (Elected staff rep, Victoria)

a perspective which was in essence endorsed by one principal:

> [council's consideration of issues] dependent on how the principal delivers the business to the council. If the principal packages some information on an agenda in a particular way the council is going to read it and adopt it without discussion ... can be packaged in such a way that it satisfies all the immediate reactions and questions of the council. (Principal, NSW)

Community representatives generally acknowledged the initiating role of college administration in much of council business, but almost without exception they strongly rejected any notion that they were "rubber stamps" for what had been determined elsewhere. Two thirds of the community members commented on the issue with almost complete consensus. Members would

> ... resign if I thought I was just a rubber stamp. (Community rep, WA)

and a number recognized, correctly, that it was

> .. the chairman's task to ensure council is not a rubber stamp. (Community rep, NSW)

Most pointed to

> ... full and vigorous debate ... (Community rep, NSW, but similar comments from every other Council)

or the fact that

> There are not many council meetings without strong debate on part of the agenda. (Council President, Victoria)

as evidence that council played an active role, however, it was recognized by a number that although it was not a rubber stamp,

> Council does tend to simply approve committee decisions. (Community rep, Victoria)

and that it

> ... usually takes a supportive role of ideas from college. (Council Chairperson, WA).

The most widely shared belief among non-college staff council members was that at the very least they constituted a sounding board where college administrators could test their ideas. In some cases that role extends to assessing and passing judgment on the idea, in others it is a matter of challenging and seeking explanations, but in the best of situations it becomes a matter of council and college mutually feeding off each other's contributions.

The front end of TAFE in Australia is, or should be, the delivery of appropriate programs and courses. Most councillors recognize that with few exceptions (and in spite of what may be expected of them) they do not possess the linkages to the local community that would enable them to be the initiators of programs and courses. They recognise

> ... there are other important links also. (Council Chairperson, WA),

that

> [College administration] contacts with the community are far more widespread than councils (Community rep, Victoria),

and that

> .. the healthiest thing is for them to know the specialist at my workplace rather than rely on me. (Community rep, Victoria)

Although this suggests a situation where councils are cast essentially in a reactive role, good councils interact dynamically with college administrators.

> ... reactive situation leads into a proactive situation ... in many cases it triggers off a different line of thought or will lead to a suggestion that we should be doing this, or writing to here, or getting information on that. (College Principal, NSW)

A further important variable is the relationship between council and "other" college staff. This relationship was viewed far more equivocally than that between council and college administration. There was an almost even division between those who identified a need to maintain an "arms length" relationship

> We are like a Board of Directors. Directors don't go onto the factory floor and ask the workers what they think of the way things are run. (Community rep, Victoria)

and those who believed in some level of integration

> I like to think that we are part of the college community. (Communmity rep, WA).

In five of the seven colleges the situation appeared to be one of "distance", a situation described as "unsatisfactory" by a number of members who expressed a desire for greater integration.

The attitude of college teaching staff towards Council is instructive. In one college where there clearly was a high level of council-"other" staff interaction, to the extent of live-in, weekend "think tank" sessions, a staff member commented

> If you feel there is someone "up there" supporting you it gives you a lot of enthusiasm. And there's always that with the Council. (Elected staff rep, Victoria)

In contrast, at other colleges staff commented

> There is empathy at the top, but staff don't know anything about councillors. They are distant completely. (Elected staff rep, Victoria)

> ... most staff and students don't know what goes on with council. (Elected staff rep, NSW)

and, commenting on the lack of contact with staff

> It is important for other [council] members to know how staff feel. (Elected staff rep, WA)

6.15 Staff representation on councils

Each council included staff representation, but in only one was there a strong impression that these staff representatives felt fully integrated into the council. This may have been a factor influencing the largely negative perceptions of council efficacy expressed by staff members of council in the previous section. All staff representatives expressed a desire to be completely involved in the affairs of council, but variously

> ... find that the staff rep can have very little to say on the majority of issues." (Elected staff rep, Victoria)

or,

> There is a tendency to agree with the college Director. I think it would be very unwise for my career to be seen to go against him. (Elected staff rep, Victoria)

There was clearly a sense of frustration among these and other staff representatives, teaching and non-teaching, and two of those interviewed indicated that they would not be interested in further service on the council.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Stated council objectives: curriculum

Although it was not an element of the research brief, it is unavoidable nevertheless that a considerable part of this paper has been devoted, directly or indirectly, to issues concerned with the efficacy of college councils. The conclusions that can be drawn are not entirely encouraging.

It is abundantly clear that government, industry and unions all favour a closer relationship of TAFE with industry and unions, principally in order to promote a more direct influence over TAFE's vocational education/training delivery.

Similarly, evidence gathered in this research indicates that most TAFE college administrators support the continuing presence of college councils.

From the results reported in Chapter 5, however, there is little evidence that college administrators value college council input into curriculum decisions, nor that they rate highly the competency of college councils to be involved in decision-making in this area. Similarly, the interview data reported in Chapter 6 provides little support for the argument that college councils are the most appropriate forum for external bodies to exercise influence on the TAFE curriculum. The interview data indicated that although curriculum issues were often discussed at council meetings, the discussion was almost invariably reactive.

With very rare exceptions, neither college administrators nor council members suggested that college course offerings should not be influenced by industry, commerce, unions or the community at large. It was simply an apparent preference for avenues of providing course related information other than through college councils. It is clear that **if the TAFE course offering is to be effectively influenced by external bodies in an initiating capacity rather than simply reactive, then either the ethos and understanding of the role of college councils** must change, or colleges will need to ensure that they possess alternative mechanisms to systematically trap this information.

7.2 Stated council objectives: democracy

Evidence that college councils fulfil other objectives stated for their existence is stronger, but not compelling. The question of democracy was not directly addressed in the questionnaire, and no college administrator volunteered comments which suggested the importance of the issue of whether or not their college council was in some sense representative of "grass roots" democracy. The question of democracy was raised, but not systematically, in a number of interviews. The writer detected only one council (reported in 6.9) where there appeared to be some feeling that there was democracy at work, but it was not a well defined objective or understanding.

7.3 Stated council objectives: promotion of TAFE

The research produced conflicting evidence regarding the effectiveness of councils as mediums for promoting TAFE to the broader community. College administrators ranked public relations highly in importance as a council function and perceived councils as both involved and competent in this role. There was a particularly high correlation between college administrator ratings of involvement and competence, and their perception of what difference it would make if the council ceased to exist. Clearly there was a positive endorsement of councils from this perspective, although somewhat surprisingly no principal volunteered written comments on the issue.

Council members (as reported in 6.3) were much more ambivalent in their assessment of this role. Approximately half rejected the notion that public relations was a council role, while the majority of those who accepted that it was a council responsibility believed that council fulfilled the role inadequately.

This dichotomy of assessments may be more apparent than real. In the interviews there was an opportunity to explore the extent to which members saw it as a council responsibility to make industry, commerce and the community aware of what TAFE could do for them. In contrast, the term "public relations" was neither defined nor explained for college administrators. It is likely that the two sets of respondents operated from within quite different frames of reference. Nevertheless, **given present concerns with the need to extend industry awareness of what TAFE has to offer, and given council member attitudes towards filling this role, then the TAFE system needs to invest a substantial effort either in developing their college councils in this direction, or to identify and develop alternative mechanisms which will accomplish the same ends**.

7.4 Stated council objectives: accountability

The fourth stated function of councils, accountability, or as it was generally termed in this study, the community watchdog role, was rated highly by college administrators and council members alike. Administrators ranked it as fourth in order of importance, (but only marginally different from planning and public relations in actual "score") and rated councils as both active and competent in this function. Perceived competency as a "public watchdog" was the factor which correlated most highly ($r = .603$) with views on the effect of councils disappearing; perceived involvement correlated very highly ($r = .538$) with the influence of council on college operations.

From the council perspective, it is evident that members accept accountability as one of their roles and although their understanding of what the concept may involve was amorphous and appeared purely intuitive, it was nevertheless a role they performed adequately. It may be concluded that **assistance to college councils to better understand their accountability role and conscious attention to this function as an element of council business will pay dividends in terms of council involvement in college operations and in terms of college administrators' perceptions of council effectiveness**.

7.5 Effective areas of council operation

The case for the existence of college councils is generally argued in terms of the preceding four sections. This research has provided few grounds for optimism that councils operate effectively in these areas, accountability being the exception. The picture, however, is not entirely bleak. There are functions and processes in which councils play prominent and valued roles. Equally, there are functions and processes in which they play relatively minor roles in most states and colleges, but at which they are judged to be most competent and in which they have the potential to make a substantial contribution to college operation. Functions which are already important include lobbying; providing a sounding board against which initiatives may be tested; and informally linking college to community. The most conspicuous competency that is apparently under-utilised is the planning role.

7.6 Strategies for more effective councils: goal orientation.

Correlation does not imply causation, but to the extent that it might suggest a positive relationship, the evidence from the survey of college administrators points to increased goal orientation as a most potent variable associated with more effective councils. Previously discussed in 5.13, goal orientation has the highest correlation of any of the process or structural variables, with both involvement and perceived competence in all council functions. It also exhibits a very strong correlation with the influence of council on college operations and has the strongest correlation of any variable (.65) with beliefs about what difference the disappearance of council would make.

The inference which might be drawn from these strong positive correlations is that **councils which possess well-defined goals are also likely to be active and competent in all nine functions which were included in this study, and to rate highly as a sounding board for college administrators**.

The evidence derived from the interviews with council members supports the existence of these relationships. Some of those interviewed suggested that well-defined goals, and the consequent motivation, were more easily established when a college was still relatively new; however, the fact that goal orientation was also central to the success of the older colleges included in the interviews, indicates the potency of this variable in contributing to the effectiveness of councils regardless of age.

Councils or college administrators concerned with the effectiveness and contribution made by councils should devote time and effort to establishing clear council goals as a major strategy for enhancing council performance.

7.7 Strategies for more effective councils: representativeness.

The survey evidence is unequivocal: the extent to which councils are rated as representative of their community correlates strongly with council involvement and competence in most functions, and with the council as an initiator of activity. The question is, what is meant by "representative"?

Information collected during interviews indicated that councils were generally not directly representative of their community. Substantial segments of the population, including a number that government social justice initiatives suggest are in the greatest need of access to the type of educational opportunities presented by TAFE, have no direct representation on councils. Their representation is indirect, through existing council members prepared to act in a trustee role. It was apparent from the interviews that a substantial majority of those interviewed interpreted "representative" in terms of government, industry, commerce and geography, overlaid by a trustee role. There is a strong possibility that college administrators had similar understandings when making their responses.

Even if this is assumed to be the case, "representativeness" nevertheless remains a cogent variable and strategies should be devised to ensure its presence. The interview data and written comments received in the survey responses indicate that the membership procedures need to be initiated from within the college community, because local knowledge is of paramount importance, but at the same time incorporating safeguards to inhibit the development of a "closed club" mentality. Further, the interview data suggests that those responsible for nominating council members might show greater creativity in their search for suitable members.

Finally, although the relative effectiveness of the councils included in the interviews was not an objective of the study, it was difficult, nevertheless, to escape the conclusion that the council which at face value impressed as being the most effective was also clearly the most directly representative of its community.

7.8 Strategies for more effective councils: partnership.

The survey data provided several sets of information which indicate that pursuit of a genuine partnership between college administrators and councils is likely to produce effective outcomes.

The extent to which council is used as a rubber stamp has a high negative correlation with every measure of council competency. The relationship is understandable. If college administrators regard councils as incompetent, then they are more likely to use them as a rubber stamp for decisions already made rather than to actively involve them in real decision-making. The overwhelming evidence from the survey, however, is that the great majority of councils from all states are regarded as competent across the majority of functions. Given reasonable processes of council nomination and selection, a college administrator could be judged as reasonably unfortunate to be confronted with an incompetent council. It is therefore a matter of principals being prepared to recognize and work with this competence.

One important element in the greater involvement of councils is a greater use of them as a sounding board for college initiatives. The survey results support such a role, while the interview data suggest that councils view this role partially in terms of accountability, and partially in terms of linking the college and local community. There was also some evidence that the sounding board role is not necessarily purely reactive and that it can lead to a dynamic, interactive relationship between college and council.

7.9 Strategies for more effective councils : orientation and staff development.

Most TAFE colleges do not invest a great deal of effort in orientation or staff development programs for council members. The survey placed orientation effort at "some". Staff development provision was rated even more lowly, at between "some" and "not at all". There were no marked differences between the states for either variable. Both the survey data and interviews suggest that a more concerted effort to provide orientation and personal development opportunities for council members will be well rewarded through enhanced council effectiveness. Both the extent of orientation and staff development provision correlate significantly with involvement and competency in a number of council functions - specifically capital works, finance, planning and the community watchdog role. The rating of involvement in all four of these functions in all states other than Victoria is strikingly low.

Interview data support the relationship suggested by the correlations, with a number of council members indicating their belief that their performance would be improved either through better orientation or through some personal development program. Although clearly such a program would include elements of the language and culture peculiar to TAFE, this, of itself, does not appear to pose a great problem. The survey data recorded consistent negative correlation between TAFE culture and every measure of involvement and competence, but rarely at a significant level. Similarly, while many council members agreed that TAFE's culture was the source of some problems and took time to adjust to, the community members of council rarely acknowledged the problem as of the magnitude suggested by college staff members of council.

7.10 Strategies for more effective councils: other

The interviews and written comments included numerous additional suggestions for enhancing council performance. Those which attracted the most substantial support are reiterated here, not because the evidence is compelling, but rather as a reminder of what a number of respondents regarded as useful mechanisms.

Foremost among these is the belief in the value of a good sub-committee structure. Sub-committees are central to the operation of Victorian councils and have been found useful elsewhere, although their use is not as systematic.

The importance of the council secretariat was the subject of numerous comments, particularly in the interviews. Similarly, the existence of a social aspect to council operation was regarded as important by a number.

Finally, there is the issue of the relationship between council and "other", non-administrative college staff members. An overwhelming impression gained from the interviews with staff members elected to councils, is that a substantial hiatus exists between councils and "other" college staff. Their perceptions, of "them" and "us", contained elements of distinct contempt for some aspects of council operation. In part, these attitudes were reflected by some community members, attitudes which could best be described as imperious. The extent of the council-college partnership must remain seriously constrained for as long as these attitudes persist.

7.11 Conclusions.

The preceding paragraphs have highlighted seven specific conclusions emanating from this research. Two of them are essentially negative in that they identify roles or properties which are commonly asserted as among the primary reasons for the existence of councils, but which the evidence suggests are largely non-existent. The other five may be viewed as positive in that they suggest specific strategies which have been found to contribute to council effectiveness.

Finally, based on evidence derived from the survey data rather than the interviews, Victorian college councils are rated as significantly more involved and more competent than the comparable bodies in other states. Victorian councils also possess substantially greater powers than do councils in other states. The relationship is probably not coincidental. Any state or territory with a belief in councils as the appropriate mechanism for relating college and community might well consider providing them with substantial power and authority as a first step towards their effective operation.

Appendix 1

tafe

OFFICE OF TAFE
151 ROYAL ST., EAST PERTH
WESTERN AUSTRALIA 6000
TELEPHONE (09) 420 4111
FAX (09) 420 4341

Your ref

Our ref

Enquiries

Dear

In confirmation of my earlier phone call, I would like to carry out interviews with members of the College Council on December 8, 9 for a research project funded by the TAFE National Centre. I have enclosed a copy of the research brief with this letter.

In essence I am concerned with attempting to establish what are the conditions, or ingredients, that collectively give rise to an effective College Council. I have already undertaken similar interviews at three NSW Colleges, three WA Colleges, and will be undertaking similar interviews at another Victorian Country College and a City College in Melbourne.

I anticipate that each interview will require approximately 45 minutes and ideally I would seek to interview eight to ten people, including yourself, the College Council Chairman, and the remainder College Council members. Should you be able to arrange only four or five interviews I would prefer that they all be on one day, Thursday December 8, and I will make alternative arrangements with another city college for interviews on the Friday.

I would be most appreciative if you could arrange the interviews I have suggested. Although I would prefer to conduct the interviews at the College I could travel to other locations if necessary.

I look forward to meeting you in the near future.

Dr J C Henderson
Manager Planning, Policy and Research
Office of TAFE Western Australia

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Appendix 2

A SURVEY OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN TAFE COLLEGES THROUGH COLLEGE COUNCILS

This study has been funded by the TAFE National Centre for Research and Development.

As part of the study every TAFE College in Australia has been sent a copy of this survey instrument. All questions, with the exception of the last which is open-ended, require you to simply tick a box or to circle an appropriate number.

Throughout the document the expression "College Council" has been used. In some States or Territories these are alternatively titled "Advisory Council" or "Advisory Committee". Would you please regard the terms as interchangeable for the purposes of this Survey.

Similarly throughout the document the term "Principal" has been used although it is recognized that in some States or Territories the term "Director" is the correct title.

There is a pre-paid addressed envelope provided for your return and your earliest cooperation would be appreciated.

Information contained in the Survey returns will be treated with complete confidentiality.

(Dr) Charles Henderson, (Principal Researcher)
Manager, Planning Policy and Research,
TAFE, Western Australia.

1. Does your College have a College Council?
Yes ☐
No ☐

If the answer to the above question is "No", then there are no further questions to be answered. Would you please return the Survey instrument in the addressed envelope provided.

If the answer to the above question is "Yes", then please continue with the following questions.

2. How many members are there on the College Council?
Less than 8 ☐
8 - 12 ☐
13 - 17 ☐
More than 17 ☐

3. How frequently does the College Council meet?
Less than 3 times each year ☐
3 - 6 times each year ☐
More than 6 times each year ☐

Questions 4 - 21 concern the role and competence of the College Council.

Please circle the number in each question that best indicates the relative role and competence of the College Council for the function listed.

4. What role does the College Council play in making decisions on capital works in the College?

Total Responsibility		Strong Recommendation			Provide Advice	No Role Whatsoever	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

5. How do you assess the competence of the College Council to make decisions on College capital works?

Total Competence		Considerable Competence			Little Competence	No Competence	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

6. What role does the College Council play in making decisions on equipment purchases in the College?

Total Responsibility		Strong Recommendation		Provide Advice		No Role Whatsoever	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	

7. How do you assess the competence of the College Council to make decisions on College equipment purchases?

Total Competence		Considerable Competence		Little Competence		No Competence	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	

8. What role does the College Council play in making decisions on staffing appointments in the College?

Total Responsibility		Strong Recommendation		Provide Advice		No Role Whatsoever	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	

9. How do you assess the competence of the College Council to make decisions on College staffing appointments?

Total Competence		Considerable Competence		Little Competence		No Competence	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	

10. What role does the College Council play in making decisions on finance and budgetting in the College?

Total Responsibility		Strong Recommendation		Provide Advice		No Role Whatsoever	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	

11. How do you assess the competence of the College Council to make decisions on College finance and budgetting?

Total Competence		Considerable Competence		Little Competence		No Competence	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	

12. What role does the College Council play in making decisions on curriculum in the College?

Total Responsibility		Strong Recommendation		Provide Advice		No Role Whatsoever	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

13. How do you assess the competence of the College Council to make decisions on College curriculum?

Total Competence		Considerable Competence		Little Competence		No Competence	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

14. What role does the College Council play in developing the College's Corporate Plan?

Total Responsibility		Strong Recommendation		Provide Advice		No Role Whatsoever	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

15. How do you assess the competence of the College Council to develop a College Corporate Plan?

Total Competence		Considerable Competence		Little Competence		No Competence	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

16. What role does the College Council play in lobbying on behalf of the College?

Total Responsibility		Strong Recommendation		Provide Advice		No Role Whatsoever	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

17. How do you assess the competence of the College Council to lobby on behalf of the College?

Total Competence		Considerable Competence		Little Competence		No Competence	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

18. What role does the College Council play in public relations on behalf of the College?

Total Involvement		Strong Involvement		Provide Advice		No Role Whatsoever	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

19. How do you assess the competence of the College Council to provide a public relations role on behalf of the college?

Total Competence		Considerable Competence		Little Competence		No Competence	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

20. What role does the College Council play as an "accountability watchdog" on the community's behalf over the College's activities?

Total Responsibility		Considerable Responsibility		Some Responsibility		No Role Whatsoever	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

21. How do you assess the competence of the College Council to act on the community's behalf as an "accountability watchdog"?

Total Competence		Considerable Competence		Little Competence		No Competence	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

22. The nine functions from the preceding questions are listed again below. Indicate by the numbers 1, 2, 3 what you consider to be the three most important functions of the College Council in order of priority.

Capital works ☐

Staffing ☐

Curriculum ☐

Public relations ☐

Community watchdog ☐

Equipment ☐

Finance & budget ☐

Lobbying ☐

Planning ☐

23. Where does most of the College Council activity originate from, within the Council or from within the College staff?

Total Council		Mainly Council		Mainly College		Total College	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

24. To what extent is the College Council a sounding board for the Principal's/College's initiatives?

Important		Some		Little		Negligible	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

25. To what extent is the College Council a rubber stamp for the Principal's/College's initiatives?

Almost always		Largely		To some degree		Not at all	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

26. How representative is the College Council of the College's "communiity"?

Almost totally		Largely representative		Marginally representative		Very little	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Questions 27 - 40 relate to factors which may help or hinder the operation of the College Council.

27. To what extent do the operations of your College Council reflect well defined goals by the Council?

Very strongly		Some influence		Little influence		Not at all	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

28. Are the outcomes which result from the degree of goal definition positive or negative to the Council's operation?

Strongly positive		Positive		Negative		Strongly negative	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

29. To what extent are the operations of your College Council the reflection of a desire for local community enhancement?

Very strongly		Some influence		Little influence		Not at all	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

30. Are the outcomes of the desire for local community enhancement positive or negative to the Council's operation?

Strongly positive		Positive		Negative		Strongly negative	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

31. To what extent are the operations of your College Council the result of management from the chair?

Very strongly		Some influence		Little influence		Not at all	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

32. Are the outcomes of the management from the chair positive or negative to the College Council's operation?

Strongly positive		Positive		Negative		Strongly negative	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

33. To what extent are the operations of your College Council the result of the composition of the membership?

Very strongly | Some influence | Little influence | Not at all

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

------- ------- ------- ------- ------- ------- -------

34. Are the outcomes of the composition of membership positive or negative to the College Council's operation?

Strongly positive | Positive | Negative | Strongly negative

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

------- ------- ------- ------- ------- ------- -------

35. To what extent are the operations of your College Council the result of the size of the Council?

Very strongly | Some influence | Little influence | Not at all

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

------- ------- ------- ------- ------- ------- -------

36. Are the outcomes of the size of the Council positive or negative to the College Council's operation?

Strongly positive | Positive | Negative | Strongly negative

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

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37. To what extent are the operations of your College Council the result of the frequency of Council meetings?

Very strongly | Some influence | Little influence | Not at all

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

------- ------- ------- ------- ------- ------- -------

38. Are the outcomes of the frequency of Council meetings positive or negative to the College Council's operation?

Strongly positive		Positive		Negative		Strongly negative	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

39. To what extent are the operations of your College Council the result of the influence you exert as Principal of the College?

Very strongly		Some influence		Little influence		Not at all	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

40. Every TAFE system has developed its own culture and language. To what extent are members of your College Council ineffective during their first year of membership because of this factor?

Very much		Largely		To some degree		Not at all	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

41. Does your College Council provide an orientation programme for new Council members?

Thorough & comprehensive		Substantial		Some		Not at all	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

42. Has there been any staff development (beyond initial orientation) provided for College Council members to assist them in fulfilling their functions?

Thorough & comprehensive		Substantial		Some		Not at all	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

43. To what extent do decisions of the College Council influence College operations?

Completely Substantially Some Minimal

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

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44. Do you believe that the College Council possesses more power than is required for the good management of the College?

Yes [ ]
No [ ]

45. Do you believe that the College Council possesses sufficient power to adequately fulfill its role?

Yes [ ]
No [ ]

46. Four means by which College members might be selected are listed below. Indicate the order of priority 1 to 4 of what you believe to be the most appropriate means of selecting an effective College Council body.

Selected by the Principal. [ ]

Nominated by the Principal, selected by the Minister [ ]

Direct nomination from Community, selected by Minister [ ]

Direct election by the Community [ ]

Other [ ]

(please state) ______________________________

____

47. If the College Council ceased to exist would it make any real difference to the degree of adequacy with which the College meets its community's needs?

Great difference Some difference Little difference No real difference

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

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48. Are there any other comments you would care to make regarding the operation of College Councils?

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